

# **Horizon**

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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**ON LUTHERANISM**

*by F. D. BORKENAU*

**THE MINIMUM WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

*by ALDOUS HUXLEY*

**THE LATIN BACKGROUND OF  
JAMES JOYCE'S ART**

*by STUART GILBERT*

**WHERE SHALL JOHN GO? VI—PERSIA**

*by CHRISTOPHER SYKES*

**COMMENTS ON AN EXHIBITION OF  
ENGLISH DRAWINGS**

*by ROBIN IRONSIDE*

**A HOMECOMING**

*by PHILIP TOYNBEE*

POEMS *by* LAURENCE BINYON, BERNARD GUTTERIDGE, JOHN ARLOTT,  
E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN, DIANA WITHERBY, AUDREY BEECHAM

REVIEW *by* STEPHEN SPENDER

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# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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# LETTER FROM A CIVILIAN

DEAR VICTOR,

Yes, I got the Camemberts; they were not quite ripe, and inferior to the pre-war standard. I am not going to thank you for them. I am completely exhausted with thanking you and replying to your many letters, letters which always end 'It must be awful in London, but keep on with HORIZON, it helps me to retain my sanity'. Well, it hasn't helped me to retain mine, so I am going to tell you exactly what I think of you. Even a civilian will turn, and let me tell you, we civilians are ripe for mutiny.

I have first turned up some of your old letters.

1939-40. You were in France then if you remember—champagne—phoney war—Paris—Maurice Chevalier singing a funny song, Ironside and Gamelin firm on the Maginot Line. You managed to go to all my favourite restaurants in Paris, and then you fought your way back to Dunkirk. We lunched the day of your return; you were a bit shaken; the sniping, the fifth-column, the bombing on the beach had upset you. 'I almost thought the Party was over,' were your words—but you were a far happier person than I, even then. That soft spotlight of History which was to hold you in its steady glow through all the years to follow already illuminated your cheerful, sun-burnt features. Of course the Party wasn't over, and while I had nightmares of the Gestapo and was arrested by some of your friends wearing beards, you went off, fortunate as usual, to the Middle East. There you raced through to Benghazi and back, while we pushed our way through broken glass and craters in the Black-out, and lay awake through those nights of the Blitz in our huge dentist's waiting room. That was a nice letter of yours about Syria, the quails and wild strawberries, the bathing at Beirut, the ski-ing and the ruins—quite poetic—and the description of social life in Cairo during the 'Flap', were unexpectedly satirical. You certainly can write, Victor, should History ever condescend to release you for such a contemptible occupation. Then came El Alamein; no letters for a bit, but a Mention in Despatches, and then long accounts of Derna and Tobruk, of 'sand-happy' delusions, of the configuration of dunes, the flora of oases. You knew I would be interested to hear how bananas grew in Derna, and how as always, 'the men are wonderful'. Those wonderful men who

seem, like you, to have but one aim, to get out of History's spotlight and go back to 1939. One cannot measure boredom in terms of time, but the period while you were trekking from Cairo to Carthage corresponded to the blackest phase in the dark night of what was left of the civilian's soul. Sometime in that long year Middle-age angrily flung the last items of youth's last belongings out of the room that for the next fifteen years it was going to occupy. Locks of hair, teeth, kisses, memories and hopes; all perished during those slow months when the scurf thickened on our collars and the bald patch shone like a rubber stamp, while the daily walk from flat to office and back, past the second-hand Oriental bookshops, and the bleak Ministry, insensibly became the dumb *rond des prisonniers*.

Just as it seemed that the desert had made you an ascetic and a mystic, your practical little girl-friend—for that is what your tank had become—picked you up and carried you out of harm's way to the flesh-pots of Tunis. Of course all this time you had to fight. Don't think I am unaware of all this fighting, it is just that which churns the guilt round and round till it curdles into a kind of rancorous despair. You are always fighting for me, in the favoured places of the world, and writing me your friendly unpatronising letters which I have to answer. Oh, why can't I fight for myself?

Your next letter came from Sicily, whence you wrote to tell me of what was damaged—and what was not damaged—of Segesta and Girgenti, Palermo and Cefalu. Oh yes, and that week's leave you snatched at Capri—how very, very kind to describe that—and Anzio, where the men were more wonderful than ever. . . . That was the time of the winter-spring Blitz in London; fire-bombs fell everywhere. Some fell on the restaurant where I was dining and set fire to my good winter-overcoat. I was eleventh away from the blaze in the chain of bucket-passers! It was then that you got angry with me for the only time, when I wrote against the bombing of Cassino. 'There are just two things in the world I live for' you replied to me—from the beach-head, of course—'Literature and killing Germans, and I should have thought you with your anti-fascist record would understand how impossible the one is without the other.'

When you did return to London you were appalled by its shabbiness and expense, its dirt and vulgarity: and its carious

houses, the contraceptives in the squares, the puddles of urine in the telephone boxes, the sulphurous wines and goat-stew in the restaurants, the bored, pale, ferrety people milling round the streets, fighting and rutting and crawling over the badly dressed prostitutes like bees round their queen. This was one of your rare glimpses, not of History, but of Reality; there was a puzzled look under the sunburn and the medals, but it was soon gone, for you went off to train in the Highlands of Scotland, and it was not until the eve of D-day that you reappeared. It was at our last meal together that, after discussing my piles and my eczema and the horrors of the Museum Exchange, you said the most unforgivable thing of all. We had a bottle of champagne—we always celebrate in this way at your expense; besides it takes champagne to raise me to subnormal. Suddenly you leant your intelligent, modest face across the table: ‘The one thing I am really grateful for is that in 1939 I was young enough, *just* young enough, mark you (with a look at me), to fight this bloody war with my body and not with my mind.’ I could have slapped your face. I could have slapped so many people’s faces and I never have. That’s why I am a civilian. Well, we ‘had’ the champagne, and a week later your Camemberts started coming—and the Flying Bombs. I know one is not supposed to say so, but I don’t care for flying bombs: to all guilty people (and by now all civilians are guilty), they are the final appointment in the dentist’s chair, and, casualties apart, they have made London more dirty, more unsociable, more plague-stricken than ever. The civilians who remain grow more and more hunted and disagreeable, like toads each sweating and palpitating under his particular stone. Social life is non-existent, and those few and petty amenities which are the salt of civilian life—friendship, manners, conversation, mutual esteem—seem now extinct for ever. Never in the whole war has the lot of the civilian been more abject, or his status so low—he is the unpopular schoolboy in the keen, tough school whose fees are ten shillings in the pound, with no one who will take him in for the holidays.

Meanwhile, what about you, Victor? Fighting as usual, making history, drinking calvados—‘you find France very little changed’, ‘you are billeted in a chateau whose salon contains a complete first edition of Voltaire’, ‘your tank goes faster than ever and now sprays flames in all directions’; ‘you are delighted to see the French reviving in the liberated towns, and all the ugly marks

of fear departing, but you are embarrassed by the head-shaving—you have won a Mercedes-Benz and a D.S.O. on the field—and now you are back in all my favourite restaurants again. I die by inches: you live in a continuous exaltation, drunk with health and action, and rewarded for it by your grateful country. When the war is over you will be ten years younger than you were when it started, and I shall be twenty years older: past love, past lust, past exercise and past ambition—but not quite—for I still have one more which goes very deep—to possess enough moral courage, after the war, to be a bum.

So no more Camamberts please, and shroud your future movements on French soil in military secrecy. You may liberate Europe, but you cannot liberate me. And when the Party really is over and you come home and marry your Tank, don't send a wedding invitation, for he will have gone underground, to your bald, bitter, shabby old friend and playmate.—CIVILIAN.

P.S.—The blocks for the children's drawings, whose absence you found time to remark, were destroyed by enemy action.

## LAURENCE BINYON BRITISH MUSEUM DIVERSION

*A play for puppets, performed by his children at Christmas*

A Statue  
A Mummy  
A Bust of a Roman Emperor  
A Museum Porter

*Scene—The Courtyard of the British Museum*

*Time—Midnight*

Statue      I am the spirit of a marble shape,  
                Tonight for this brief moment I escape;  
                I flee from that eternal pedestal  
                And the blank boredom of my prison wall.  
                These moonlit columns, this scholastic shade,  
                Remind me of the land where I was made!  
                But ah! which land? That is my secret woe.  
                How shall I tell, when keepers do not know?  
                Once I was Greek, of the best period,  
                Envied by many a Goddess, many a God,

## HORIZON

Placed in a proud position. Set apart,  
 A masterpiece; and now—it breaks my heart,  
 I'm Græco-Roman. Now the passer-by,  
 Who used to lift so reverent an eye,  
 No sooner scans my label than his nose  
 Turns up, and off, disdainfully, he goes.  
 I that was throned and worshipped in my pride  
 Now hardly get a mention from the Guide  
 —But who is this disturbs my solitude  
 And dares on my unhappiness intrude?

*Mummy Statue*

I was a queen in Egypt.

Idle claim;

You know there is a query to your name.

*Mummy Statue*

But you are more than queried, you're degraded.  
 Labels may alter, beauty has not faded,  
 And as for you, O Mummy, all the spice  
 Of Egypt cannot ever make you nice.

*Mummy Statue*

But I was flesh and blood. You can but own  
 A cold inhuman tenement of stone,  
 Here in my bosom was a fiery heart.

*Statue Mummy Statue*

I live in the eternal realm of Art.  
 And who regards you? Hundreds round me crowd,  
 And do the gapes of Cockneys make you proud?  
 They recognize a queen in balm and dust.  
 In the judicious you but rouse disgust.  
 O if it's the judicious you would please  
 You're welcome. I like lovers on their knees  
 Imploring me—

*Statue Emperor*

But silence—someone's here;  
 Another ghost and looking most severe.

*Emperor*

I am a Roman Emperor. I am bored,  
 I'm not pleased that my nose has been restored.  
 Why restore that, and not restore the feasts,  
 The Circuses, the victims, and the beasts,  
 The crowns of roses, fountains spouting wine,  
 And all the purple pleasures that were mine?  
 The Baths—Ye Gods; Excuse the imperial tear,  
 I'm scrubbed with soap and water once a year.

*Statue Emperor*

Let him decide between us.  
 What's the matter?

I seemed to interrupt some lively chatter.

*Statue Mummy Emperor*

She says—  
 She says—

Not both at once, I pray,  
 I'm sure I know what you are going to say

- Both* We, No;  
*Emperor* An Emperor is not contradicted.  
 I'm famous for the tortures I inflicted  
 On people who said No when I said Yes—  
 Tremble; that's right. As anyone could guess  
 You ladies are contending for the prize  
 Of beauty. It is no use making eyes  
 At me, I'm quite impartial.
- Mummy* She pretends  
 Because my temporary label ends  
 With a contemptible query, that I've gone  
 And lost all my attraction.
- Statue* She had none,  
 But just because my label's been repainted  
 She says I'm altered and my beauty tainted.  
 Ridiculous.
- Mummy* Who cares for Græco-Roman  
 A paltry period. I am eternal, woman,  
 I lived in scandal and I died in sin,  
 That's what the world is interested in.
- Emperor* How true: but why this agitating fuss,  
 What do these paltry labels mean to us?  
 Why pay attention to these musty scholars?  
 The matter's one of pounds or rather dollars.  
 What are you worth, ladies, what are you worth?  
 That is the only thing that counts on earth.  
 The other day a bird, to be precise,  
 A pigeon whispered in my ear your price.
- Statue* Prices! how miserably mercantile:  
*Mummy* And you would measure us in scales so vile?  
*Statue* That's Rome all over. Now I know I'm Greek.
- Emperor* I'll have your heads off if you dare to speak.  
*Statue* You're a mere man and only a bust at that.  
*Emperor* What, what, an Emperor ignored; the cat:  
*Mummy* Out of the way and let me get at her.
- [*They fight.*]      Egyptian rottenness:
- Emperor* By Jupiter  
 Since I can't silence this unseemly brawl  
 I'll skip back safely to my pedestal.
- Porter* What's all this? Here you aren't allowed to fight.  
 Museum objects, too, and out at night;  
 Against all rules. Here's pretty goings on!  
 I'm jiggered. They *were* here and now—they're gone.

*BERNARD GUTTERIDGE*

## TANANARIVE

Hills blossom in small red houses: the Palace  
Governs like an implacable queen her plains  
And lazing people. The children play like ducklings.  
All are so happy but nothing here seems clean  
Except the gull-like washing and white arum lilies.

We take over the bars and speak English arrogantly,  
Stare at the pigeon—crouching French whose faces  
Speak with their voices. Rhum, citron and orange pressé:  
And sly, beautiful soignée women take  
No notice at all of our caps and Sam Brownes.

Flags are saluted everywhere: above the dusty street  
High in the lilac trees we see from the verandah  
The ice-like stillness of encircling ricefields, greenly glinting;  
Pousse-pousse boys jolt past like broken toys  
And above us all the time frowns the forbidding palace.

Some of it is quite lovely. Down in the market place  
An acre of red and white carnations, a moving scent of cloves,  
And girls like Hedy dressed in Gauguin colours  
Slipping among the striding, pavement—singing soldiers.  
And subtle, ageless children more wicked than any pirate.

Till night holds all its treacheries cupped like a black breast  
With light in the town its sensuous, desirous smile.  
All over the small hills depart the ambushing steps  
That crumble and snare; and in the drifting gloom  
The velvet stab of pleasure that pushes to the heart.

*September 1942*

*JOHN ARLOTT*

## INVITATION TO THE LOCAL

The swing-doors, dark curtained, will let you in  
To the heat and light and merging din  
Of laughter sprung from broad-based humour  
And gossip out of slight-based rumour,  
The weighted pause for the point of a joke  
Till sudden roars ride the waves of the smoke  
To drown the whisper of racing tips  
And crackle of bags of potato chips.

Old women with Guinness and beaver coats,  
Scrub-wrinkled fingers and beads at their throats,  
Tap gently with tired, black-booted feet  
To faded piano's nostalgic beat.

Catch the reflection of beer-engine's brass  
In the wealthy brown of a full pint-glass,  
Haunting and sad is the smell of spilt beer—  
If beer is best, what heaven is here.

The barmaid twists in her tight satin frock  
To look at the pale-faced oracle clock,  
Then, shouts and jostling for the night's last drink  
The till-bell rings and the glasses clink.

Now shuffling of boots on the splintery floor,  
Warm-breathing crush in the wide-open door,  
And the night-wind strikes with cheek-chilling stroke  
To carve a deep cleft in the banks of smoke—  
They're turning them out of the old 'Black Bull'  
For both the till and its fillers are full.

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

## RIMBAUD MEETS VERLAINE

When the wonder-poet entered, gawky, the Rue Nicolet,  
All the Domesticities, flouted cherubs, flew away.  
He approached the pregnant child-wife, dwelling in her parents'  
house,  
With a puma's circumspection, visibly a girl-shy mouse.  
Paul and Cros were at the station; somehow he had missed his  
host.  
Pale Matilde and social mother stared as if they saw a ghost:  
No de Musset, no de Vigny, no marmoreal Lamartine,  
But a raw-boned, red-thumbed peasant, slate-blue-trousered,  
seventeen.  
Luggage none but what hung from him, cotton socks, and stringy  
tie,  
And a penetrative arrow from each poignant azure eye.  
Charles de Sivry entertained him with Parisian smallest talk:  
Was the city what he fancied? Did he mind the dusty walk?  
And his mother? Bored by farm-work? Eggs how many laid each  
hen?  
Were the fashion-papers studied in the depth of the Ardennes?  
Worshipper of Victor Hugo? And his literary plans?  
They had read his MS. verses and supposed they were a man's.  
Monosyllables he answered, yawned, and stretched his long legs  
out,  
Then, retiring into silence, scorned them with a sullen pout.  
Conversation flagged; the front-door! Vast relief! Charles Cros  
and Paul!  
Lurches in the bard Saturnian, and the faces start to fall.  
Fate has willed it, and a Fury waves, unseen, a flaming brand,  
As the adolescent, rising, takes the hospitable hand.  
Can this absinthe-loving satyr grow a true child of the sun?  
Can he bear the solemn torment under which the prize is won?  
Try him, Visionary, try him! He has asked you to his home.

Be instinctive, be audacious! Free him from that puling gnome,  
From that cockatoo who bare her, from her half-brother, the loon,  
And their friend, the poetaster! Drive them forth, and that right  
soon!

Drive them forth with scourge of Vision, as Christ made the  
Temple clean;

Leave not in that ransomed nature one regret for what has been!  
But Verlaine saw Beauty only, Beauty offered to his touch,  
Ganymede as well as Helen; the good God had given him much,  
Such a wife, and such a comrade, and within a month a son,  
And the booze, and the reunions—what variety, what fun!  
But, while yet his gaze absorbed the boy whom he had thought a  
man,

A queer inkling made him wonder if this really was life's plan,  
And his faun eyes twinkled wildly with conception of a sin  
That would make his spirit golden and fulfil the dream within,  
And, forgetting his frail child-wife and the baby in her womb,  
Every sense he yearned to bury in that face, as in a tomb.

Then the girl clung to her parent, for she felt the web was spun,  
Something startled into being that could never be undone;  
And she looked away from Maman to the little pampered hound  
That from guest to guest was running, till a tit-bit should be  
found,

While the young provincial muttered, in a patois grave and ripe,  
'Les chiens, ce sont des libéraux', and filled a recking pipe.

*DIANA WITHERBY*

## THE MOMENT ON THE HONEYMOON

The moment on the honeymoon when all the strands  
Were separate. Atlantic rain was blowing down  
In drifts against the window; on the tablecloth  
Of baize the shell which I had lifted to my ear  
As child, and by the shell his meaty hand. A child,  
A wife, and in this unchanged room no years between.  
'A jolly sort of place for children, here,' he said,  
'But on these rainy days did you go out,  
Or play around indoors?' 'We went for walks, the sand  
Was wet, too wet for digging. Water poured on rocks  
Already drenched from sea, the spray was shot through rain  
And floated on our misted lashes. Foam—'  
'You must have been completely soused!' and he had moved  
With jointy clumsiness of those who cannot rest.  
I hated him and yet already I was caught,  
If he alone had caught me I could still have gone,  
But in my heart the self-made snare had sprung,  
The terrible maternal pity. Even then  
I felt it, when, like silly lion, he paced the room,  
As if the rain would fade because he walked instead  
Of sitting. To have and to hold him I do not  
Want is my life. When death has parted us the dry  
Sea-pinks and salty grass will still be growing where  
Near dunes they grew the moment on the honeymoon.

## AUDREY BEECHAM

### TWO SONNETS

#### I

Each year spring absconded from his heart,  
Sconced in grief for winter's frozen bird:  
Grey and sad he hears the unspoken word  
Refuse to be his friend or take his part.  
He has forgotten every hard-learned art  
To whistle up the eagle: all that stirred  
In streets of foreign towns or seas which lured  
His hand to burn the salt-encrusted chart.

Like a stranded elm he seems to creep  
Towards the sky where no sound echoes back  
But thunder; and his blunted roots are sunk  
Into the parched years of a drought so deep  
They cannot find the contrapuntal track  
Of subterranean streams which made them drunk.

#### II

The rootless, fastly bound to the rounded earth,  
Are dragged by tides and shoulder-glancing moon.  
In childhood, spewing out the tarnished spoon,  
They dance upon a hollow rim of mirth.  
By centrifugal force spinning from birth,  
Taunted and driven by a half-learnt tune,  
They spill their sands out for the singing dune  
Or wander through uncharted wastes of dearth.

But after death their wasted days shoot stars  
Across the jagged course, the Dragon's Tail,  
And light the chain of chasms where their fall  
Sundered a plain. The livid cage-like bars  
Wherein they blundered, will dissolve like hail;  
And carrion fate resolve in clarion call.

*F. D. BORKENAU*

## ON LUTHERANISM

THE greater part of northern and a considerable part of southern Germany are Lutheran. The conviction is growing that this fact has something to do with Germany's peculiar political attitudes and spiritual traditions. The times are past when historians could afford to neglect the profound effect religion has had in the shaping of national character. Nobody would dream of denying that Catholicism has stamped characteristically all nations where it prevails. That applies to German Catholics as much as to any other Catholics. And in fact all those characteristics which are regarded as typically German are absent or only weakly developed among German Catholics, who, after all, are nearly half the German nation. This specifically Protestant character of what is regarded as most specifically German is alone sufficient to show the importance of Lutheranism in the shaping of German national character.

In any attempt to understand the German problem, an analysis of Lutheranism is therefore of paramount importance. What does it stand for? What is its relation to other Protestant creeds? What is its relation to the values of western civilization? What is its effect on Germany's political and spiritual traditions? These are questions which cannot be answered within one short article. The few hints that follow are therefore merely meant as indications of a certain line of interpretation.

Before we turn to the content of Lutheranism, it will be useful to emphasize that two geographical facts stand out in relation to its distribution. It is, on the whole, a distinctly northern religion. Less even than other Protestant creeds has it succeeded in taking root in the south. There is nothing in Lutheranism to correspond to the Calvinists of southern France, Geneva or southern Hungary. Apart from insignificant nuclei, Karlsruhe, Augsburg and a few towns in Slovakia are its southern outposts: and these outposts are isolated from the bulk of the Lutheran communities.

If the reformation as a whole, in one of its aspects, must be interpreted as a rising of the north against southern traditions,

then Lutheranism embodies this northern enmity against Mediterranean things with particular stringency. In other words, the geographical distribution of Lutheranism contains a hint that northern Germany has been particularly refractory against the traditions coming down from the Roman empire. Charlemagne's forcible conversion of the Saxons to Rome remained incomplete.

That aspect of the question is well known. Another aspect is much less commented upon though, in fact, it stands out much more sharply. After all, despite differences of degree, it is not only Lutheranism but the reformation as a whole which is a specifically northern phenomenon. But within the reformation movement, Lutheranism stands out as the specifically eastern version. This is a difference, not of degree, but of kind. Hanover is Lutheran, but Holland is Calvinist. Lübeck is Lutheran, but Hamburg is under strong Calvinist influence and Bremen completely Calvinist. In central Germany, Saxony and Thuringia are completely Lutheran, but Hesse-Cassel is an area of transition, with strong Calvinist traditions, while all Protestant districts of the middle Rhine, from Nassau to Wesel, are entirely Calvinist. South of the Main, Protestant Franconia, with Nuremberg as its centre, is Lutheran through and through. Frankfort, though Lutheran, has already an influential 'reformed', i.e. Calvinist, minority, and the Protestant parts of the Palatinate are entirely Calvinist. Still farther south, Augsburg is Lutheran, but Memmingen and Lindau are Calvinist. Queerest of all is the religious history of Würtemberg, where the dukes originally adopted the Lutheran dogma, but the people, against fierce ducal resistance, brought into being a Congregational type of church organization which is as Calvinist in spirit as Scotland itself. The only western outpost of Lutheranism is Baden, not the present province, but its original nucleus round Karlsruhe, about one tenth of the present Baden in size.

These religious differences within Protestantism do not lie, today, on the surface. They did lie on the surface from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The Napoleonic period brought the amalgamation under one ruler of territories previously independent, and, resulting from it, in all German territories attempts at an amalgamation of previously independent Protestant Churches. In the realm of organization this amalgamation often succeeded. The Calvinists of Elberfeld today belong to

the same Prussian Protestant Church as the Lutherans of Koenigsberg, the Calvinists of Ludwigshafen to the same Bavarian Protestant Church as the Lutherans of Nuremberg. But the dogmatic differences, though obsolete, are not entirely dead. Much more important, the style of life created by different religious traditions continues to differ profoundly according as to whether the local tradition is Lutheran, Calvinist or intermediate.

What are the spiritual facts reflected in that geographical distribution of creeds? Perhaps we can best approach them by formulating one more problem. Everywhere in Europe, and in western Germany more than anywhere else, the reformation was, among other things, a social revolution. In Germany, that revolution had its climax in the peasant rising of 1525. But eastern Germany, the home of Lutheranism, remained almost entirely untouched by this revolutionary movement. None of the factors disrupting feudal society farther west was yet operative in eastern Germany. Town life was extremely weak, and had actually become weaker during the second half of the fifteenth century. There was no rising bourgeoisie. The power of the Junkers, both as against their princes and against their peasants, was rising: their social supremacy less and less challenged. The Lutheran reformation profoundly differed from the western reformation in that it was hardly at all a revolutionary, and therefore almost exclusively a religious, movement. It is an important difference. But the question then becomes only more urgent: How could the most backward part of Europe, where not even the mediæval type of town life had succeeded in getting a secure footing, put itself at the head of so profound a transformation of religious life? If we look at eastern Germany as an outlying district of the western world, and at its religious crisis as part of the history of western civilization, we are confronted with an insoluble puzzle.

Perhaps the puzzle can be solved by an entirely different approach. Perhaps it should be queried whether the whole German reformation makes part of western history. It is well known that, in east-central Europe, there exists a border zone which, for a long time, was contested by the Roman and the Greek Churches. Roman missionaries met Greek missionaries, first in Croatia, Hungary, Bohemia-Moravia, later in Lithuania and farther north. In the end most, though not all, of these contested

regions became Latin, not Greek. But it is generally admitted that, in some cases at least—Moravia is often quoted as an outstanding instance—an attitude difficult to define, yet unmistakable, points to eastern much rather than western associations. Suppose we try out this same approach in the interpretation of Lutheranism? Let us suppose that the conversion of the eastern German plain to the Latin Church by German conquerors from west of the Elbe was no more than an historical accident. Let us remember that the extermination of the Slavs by these conquerors is a myth, that, though for centuries Slavonic speech has died out in most of eastern Germany, its inhabitants are yet, overwhelmingly, direct descendants of Slavs—not excluding the Slavonic local aristocracy, which was merged with the invading German knights. Let us remember that the social system of Prussia—a war-making gentry owning medium-sized estates and lording it over a miserable peasantry servile till deep into the nineteenth century—differs in nothing from the social system of Poland and of pre-Communist Russia, while it differs in everything from the social system of western Germany and of the West in general. Let us also consider that the weakness of the towns is itself a characteristically eastern feature, due to the fact that the Polis of classical antiquity wandered West in the age of the Roman Empire, but never reached the East. Let us not forget that the coexistence and alternation of power between an insolent aristocracy and an unbridled autocracy has been typical of Russian as much as of Prussian history. Proofs enough, and referring to essential features of social life, that the structure of eastern Germany is thoroughly eastern in type. For there is, and it would be useful to remember it more consistently than is sometimes done, an eastern European type of society, which begins east of the Elbe, and is the basis of the civilization of many nations.

How does religion, and more specifically Lutheranism, fit into that picture? In order to get an answer, it is necessary shortly to discuss the differences between the eastern and the western Churches. It is well known that the dogmatic differences between the creeds of Rome and of Constantinople are slight, and would hardly explain so deep and lasting a rift as that existing between the two Churches. But there is also general agreement that the schism reflects more than the political aspirations of the Roman popes on the one hand, and of Byzantine and Muscovite emperors

on the other. The western and eastern religious backgrounds differ widely, though the respective dogmatic formulæ differed little. From this state of things derives a difficulty of presentation. Where to find the *differentia specifca* which explains the rift? I believe it can most easily be discovered in the differences between the eastern and western conceptions of monastic life. Everywhere, before the advent of Protestantism, monastic life was regarded as the Christian life *par excellence*.

The original conception of monasticism is entirely eastern. Its first embodiment was—these things are trite—migration to the desert. It embodied to the highest degree what, in the East, was always the practical core and kernel of the faith—turning the back to the world. Eastern monastic life can be a life of fierce, self-torturing asceticism, or of quiet contemplation. But it can only be one of these two things. The monastic orders in the East have always been in the forefront of the struggle for orthodoxy. But no eastern order ever conceived of itself as an instrument for the reshaping of secular life. That was what it turned its back on. As a result, a gap opened between the monastical religious *élite* and the ordinary believers. The life of the laity was little controlled in its everyday moral aspects. The life of the monasteries also did not centre around practical moral problems, but around dogma, mystical experience, and prowesses of asceticism.

The West was very reluctant to accept the eastern monastical tradition. When it did so, it was only accepted with a difference. St. Benedict of Nursia conceived of his order as a strictly organized body, where a strict identity of living would be enforced upon everybody. The core of this new way of living was neither asceticism nor contemplation but obedience, discipline and work of all kinds, even physical work. It was a short step from this starting-point to making the religious orders the spearhead of the work of Christianization and moral control of the laity. Every subsequent monastical reform has strengthened the main features of the rule of St. Benedict. Cluniacs, Cistercians, Dominicans, Jesuits, mark the main steps of this development of the monastic life on lines of centralized discipline, practical work for the Church and for the moral control of the laity, and development of a morality not of religious virtuosity but of a type accessible, in principle, to the laity also. Conceptions such as those underlying the Dominican and Jesuit rules would be quite impossible in the

eastern Church. So also would be the conception of such lay orders as the third order of St. Francis, or of orders for the secular clergy, such as the Oratory, which are based on the assumption that there is no basic difference between lay and monastical morality, and that the latter is only a more accomplished form of the former. More and more, in the West, monastical life centres around the twin conceptions of practical morality and good works on the one hand, and of upholding the power of the Church on the other.

It has been said, with perfect correctness, that the western reformation as embodied in Calvinism did nothing but transfer these conceptions to the life of the laity. Certain rules, impracticable for the laity, such as celibacy and the rule of poverty, were abolished. But on the whole the strict demands on practical morality and systematic observation of the commandments were now extended to an hitherto all too easy-going laity. Puritanism, despite all appearances, is essentially the extension of the western monastical conception to the laity. This movement could have no counterpart in the East, where the secular life differed in kind from the life of the anchorites, and where the two were not conceived as two different degrees of the same virtues, but as opposed to one another and connected only through the mystical adoration the laity gives to the great saints and starets.

Where, in this division, does Lutheranism stand? The most cursory glance at Luther's own teaching provides an answer. Luther's basic religious experience was determined by his passionate embracing of the teachings of the Epistle to the Romans and his equally passionate rejection of James. James taught that the law, the practical moral law, must be fulfilled in the first place. Paul, an ex-Pharisee converted to the diametrical contrary of Phariseism, taught that the law kills, whereas the pneuma gives life. It is this second conception which is the basis of Lutheranism. 'Commit sins a thousand times a day, it will not prevent you from being saved, if only you believe in your Saviour.' Thus Luther. The basis of Luther's religious experience is Antinomian. Here, I believe, we touch the root of the matter, and precisely at the point where religion has most deeply influenced the development of eastern as well as western civilization.

Perhaps, in order to make the point clearer, it is useful to take up the trend previously followed under a slightly different angle.

Dominating currents of thought and ways of life can very well be defined in terms of the chief deviations to which they are liable. Nobody, I believe, should doubt that the chief danger of the typically western Puritan insistence on practical morality and legality is Phariseeism. Hypocrisy is the chief trap of a moralistic conception of religion. For no man is sinless. And the ideal of a sinless life is therefore fraught with dangers. The deeper religious spirits in the West were always keenly alive to precisely this danger. (The work of George Fox centred round the struggle against it.) By contrast, Antinomianism, blatant amorality, is the chief danger of a religious conception centring round the abysmal sinfulness of man and seeking its cure in a mystical denial of the secular world. This is not going to say that Lutheranism, or the Eastern church, were amoralistic. They were, on the contrary, as keenly aware of the danger as the best Puritans were of the danger of hypocrisy. But as a relapse into Pharisee hypocrisy is the constant accompaniment of Western religious history, in North and South, and the more so the later the period in question, thus Antinomianism, systematic and proud defiance of the moral law, is the constant accompaniment, a never-ceasing undercurrent of all Eastern Christian life.

These tendencies are much more clearly marked in the Eastern church than in Lutheranism, and before turning to the latter we shall therefore, for the sake of clarifying the problem, first devote a few words to the former. Sects, in all Church history, are nothing but the embodiment of the inherent tendencies of the official Churches carried to extremes. Gradual transitions connect the absurd and the sublime. Who, to take one instance, would dare to identify the Eastern Church with that Antinomian sect of Chlisty who practised orgiastic promiscuity in order to experience that abysmal divine grace which is only dispensed to the worst of sinners? Yet, divided as this aberration is by an abyss from the official Russian Church, one must still remember certain features of the Chlisty movement which would be impossible in the West. Its affinity to certain early Christian gnostic sects (e.g. the Carpocratians) is obvious. But it is perhaps more significant that the Chlisty were not a sect of urban *declassés*, but of peasants. There have been Antinomian peasant sects in the West, but only one of them, the Adamites, of any wide significance, and characteristically they sprang up on the border between eastern and

western civilization, among the Slavs of Bohemia during the Hussite wars. Still the Adamites came into being in a revolutionary era, and embraced a revolutionary creed. That does not apply to the Chlisty, ordinary Russian peasants very far from all ideas of social revolution. What, on the border of East and West, springs up in moments of extreme tension, and in the real West never springs up at all, is apt, in the East, at any time to become an ingredient of ordinary folk-life.

But we have not yet done with the Chlisty. For the truly remarkable fact is that their influence was not only limited to villagers inadequately cared for by their parish clergy. Rasputin was one of them, and Rasputin was the greatest spiritual influence at the court of the last Tzar. I say 'spiritual influence' quite intentionally. Generally, Rasputin has been treated simply as a cheat, a false miracle-doer capturing the imagination of a tottering court whose members felt the rope round their neck. But taken like this, Rasputin's story is incomprehensible. The timid Tsar, the proud, puritanical Tsarina, were not ignorant of the fact that Rasputin came home dead drunk every night, that he had innumerable mistresses, that he amassed money; worse perhaps than all this, that, in his native village he had followed the honourable profession of a horse-thief. He had healing powers, undeniably, and used them on the Tsarevitch. But it was not simply in that light that they saw it at Tsarskoe Selo. For them, he was, in the first place, a man of God, a true, inspired prophet. His healing powers certified to his divine inspiration. And it just did not occur to these men and women at the head of the social hierarchy, these privileged defenders of the true faith, that stealing, gluttony and fornication could in the least diminish the certainty of divine election which was so clearly entrusted to hands that could heal by a mere touch. The whole distance between East and West is revealed in such incidents, which are here discussed for that reason, and not at all for the sensational appeal they have in the West, but could never have in the East, where they are commonplace. And to jump from the pseudo-mystical to the political: The profound popularity, the almost divine worship offered to more than one tyrant in the East, also finds its explanation in this attitude which appreciates inspiration quite irrespective of its moral content. Is it part of the explanation of certain German things also, such as the Hitler-cult?

The mentality behind the Rasputin episode could be expressed in the theological formula: The greatest grace is given to the greatest sinners. It is a formula which, within limits, Catholics might be able to accept. Puritans would hardly accept it in practice. It is dominating in the whole life of the Eastern Church. It has its unsavoury aspects—as Puritanism has its unsavoury aspects—such as those revealed in Rasputin. But it also dominates the highest embodiment of the Eastern spiritual experience. It is contained in the story of Christ and the sinful woman. It is emphasized a hundred times in the gospels, which all lay particular stress on the fact that Jesus preferred to associate with sinners rather than with the morally impeccable. The Eastern Church, during the Byzantine era, has gone through a phase when morality was pushed into the background by mystical metaphysics. But in the Russian period of the Eastern Church, moral problems have come to the foreground again, particularly during the nineteenth century (perhaps, probably even, under Western influence) but with an accent directly opposed to that of the West. It is probably correct to say that the highest type of Russian orthodoxy in the nineteenth century can be found in the later work of Dostoevski. (It is characteristic that his influence in Germany was tremendous, in France and Britain next to zero.) And Dostoevski's spiritual experience, as developing in his own life and expressed in his so-called novels which, in fact, are parables on moral theology, can again be summed up in the one sentence: The highest grace is given to two types: to those who are not of this world and to those who are wading completely in its mud: to Alyosha and to Mitya Karamasov, to Myshkin and to Raskolnikov. The moralist, the representative of correct behaviour, stands out all the time as the embodiment of loveless hypocrisy and spiritual pride, the satanic power on earth. What then is the difference between the creed of Dostoevski and that of Rasputin? Only that the Chlyst medicine-man unblushingly practised vice and was content with it, whereas the true Eastern mystic accepts it as a necessary stage of salvation but shuns the horror of proclaiming it as a religious duty. But, to say it again: as the Western church is constantly walking along a precipice where Phariseeism, hypocrisy and spiritual pride lurk to destroy it, so the thinnest line of division separates Eastern Christianity from the abyss of Antinomianism, of blatant immoralism. It should be recognized

that the needs of practical morality and of mystical experience, far from pointing in the same direction, are difficult to conciliate. The profound contrast between two ways of life evolved from the same Christian basis, and even from almost the same dogmatic formulæ, points to a sharp antagonism in human nature. But we must stop at this point, regretfully, and turn back to our main problem.

After a long detour, we come back to Lutheranism. Only now can we attempt tentatively to answer how it fits into the eastern and western religious tradition. Our interpretation should start from Luther's own personal experience. He was a passionate man, and formulæ meant little to him. He knew well, of course, that no man is sinless, yet, as a young monk, he attempted what is the inherent aim of western monasticism. He attempted to lead a sinless life, and decided it was impossible. Then he turned round radically. That half-morality which alone is within reach of mortal man cannot have any value in the eyes of God. Therefore, religious life, and the doctrine of grace expressing it, must be built on the radical denial of the religious importance of moral values. This is Lutheranism in a nutshell.

It might be contended that, after all, it is not only the core of Lutheranism but of the reformation as a whole. For the doctrine that man cannot satisfy God is common ground of the reformers, and the chief dividing line between Catholicism and Protestantism. I am inclined to think that on this point the western reformers, Zwingli and Calvin in the first place, were under the towering influence of Luther's religious personality and were almost bullied into accepting a doctrine which was not an adequate expression of their own inner experience, which was totally moralistic.

At any rate, while Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, John Knox, etc., attempted to reform religion on the lines of the fiercest, most intruding control of the everyday morality of the ordinary parishioner, nothing like it was attempted by Luther or in any strictly Lutheran country. But it would not be sufficient to say that the western reformation Churches, while in doctrine as contemptuous of moral achievement as Luther, were in fact and practice fiercely moralistic. That is not the whole story. There is a decisive theological difference between the Lutheran and the western reformation, which touches just the point here under discussion. Luther knew of a substitute for moral achievement.

That substitute he called 'faith'. It is one of the most intricate theological notions, and points to a very complex psychological experience. For 'faith' in the Lutheran meaning, is not simply belief in certain revealed truths. It is the firm trust of a sinful child that the merciful Father in heaven will accept it, though it cannot mend its ways, provided only that it acknowledges its sinfulness and throws itself entirely upon God's mercy. But what is this notion of faith unless it is, though less forcibly formulated, precisely the relation between sin and mercy as interpreted by the Russian religious thinkers? Nobody, Luther teaches, can be saved unless he knows of his sins and knows that they are unalterable. And it is on the basis of this knowledge that salvation must take place. Sin, for Luther as for Dostoevski, has a positive religious accent, it is through contrition the chief avenue to faith and to grace.

It is obvious that Calvin and the other western reformers were worlds apart from such an idea. They shared Luther's belief in the abysmal sinfulness of man, but they did not accept his compensatory belief in the saving power of faith. They put in its stead the belief in predestination, in God's inscrutable decrees of redemption and damnation, which have nothing to do with a person's merits, least of all with the sentimental relation he is able to establish with his God. This sentimental relation (the word 'sentimental' being here used both in its positive and in its unpleasant implications) is precisely the core of the Lutheran religious experience. A true Lutheran could never, like Bunyan, be tortured by the fear of having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. That sin, which cannot be forgiven, is only the quintessence of those many innumerable sins which can never be forgiven to those who believe in morality as a way to salvation. For the true Lutheran, there are no sins that cannot be forgiven. On the contrary, sin is the pre-condition of faith.

If this is the main religious content of Lutheranism, and if it is a content wholly eastern in type, it becomes easy to assess the significance of Lutheranism in the course of European history. The East had given Christianity to the world, but it had also given Christianity a development leading to an incrustation of the faith in more and more complex theological formulæ. From the tenth century onwards, the East had become totally unproductive in the religious as in other spheres. Yet the fountain of religious experience had not dried up completely. It started to flow again

when the impact of the West forced the East out of its rigid attitudes. That latter process naturally proceeded from west to east. It started where the east borders on the west, in Eastern Germany, Bohemia, Moravia. It gradually reached Russia. It could not at once penetrate into the old strongholds of the Byzantine church, which had become petrified in their civilization. The new creative developments in the East started, not in the south-eastern homelands, but in the north-eastern half-barbaric outposts of the eastern civilization. Therefore, the East did not come alive again until, in the reformation, north-western Europe had come very much alive. The rising of the north-western countries against Rome in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the signal for the rebirth of the East. Lutheranism was the first main stage of this rebirth (Hussitism its chief precursor). The second main stage started with the Russian spiritual movement of the nineteenth century, and is now going through its climax in the Russian revolution. German history, ever since Luther's days, has been a constant tug-of-war between the eastern and the western currents in her make-up.

We might stop at this point, but it is perhaps useful to add a few remarks about the effects of the common Eastern and Lutheran attitude to the law, to sin and grace, upon secular, and more particularly upon political life. On the surface of things, the difference in these matters between Lutherans and Eastern Christians is very considerable. Nobody with any knowledge of the life of North-Eastern Germany, as far as it is at all determined by Lutheran piety, can fail to notice the puritanical strain in it. The typical puritan virtues, hard work, economy, cleanliness, those virtues which Peter the Great and Stalin had to impose upon their unwilling Russians with the whip, are typical Lutheran virtues. They hardly fit into the Lutheran dogma, with its exclusive concern with the mystical relation between sin and grace, and its sovereign unconcern for the law and practical morality. They must be traced to western influence, to the strong influence of a crypto-Calvinist current in nearly all Lutheran territories, and, in the case of Prussia, to the Calvinist creed of the dynasty and to the immigration of huge numbers of French Huguenots. I tend to believe, however, that this puritanical morality is only the surface of German Lutheranism, and that the spiritual history of Northern Germany consists to a large extent in the breaking

forth of the underlying eastern trends through a westernized surface; a process the more complex because it coincides in time with a parallel process of capitalist and industrial development running in the opposite direction, tending even more to westernize Germany's surface. This is quite apart from the constant tug-of-war between Germany's western and eastern regions. For, of course, the truly eastern undercurrents are only to be found in Germany's eastern half.

To turn now to these undercurrents and to their expression on the surface: a religion whose core is the denial of the religious significance of the moral law can have little to say in matters of the shaping of everyday life. And this is indeed typical of Lutheranism, as it is typical of the eastern Church. Active intrusive interference in practical everyday problems is, though in slightly different forms and with considerably different aims, equally characteristic of Catholicism and Puritanism. It is equally alien to the eastern and to the Lutheran Church. The world is left to the forces of the world—an old gnostic and Manichean principle, living on in the East despite its inacceptability to the official Christian dogma. For Luther, the 'prince of this world' is quite simply the devil. Naturally, therefore, the world, being entirely evil, can only be ruled by evil means. The princes received the sword to wield it. Both the living part of the eastern Church—its monasteries and their worshippers—and the living part of the Lutheran Church—the conventicles of pietists—have always scrupulously abstained from politics. In the practical world this means that they have always been abjectly subservient to political rulers, however cruel, tyrannical and criminal. Lutheranism and the Russian Church—the relations between Church and emperor in Byzance were more complex—have never been political forces. Their only political activity was the eager and unqualified support of the existing rulers.

What applies to the relation of secular and spiritual affairs in society, applies equally to the relation between the worldly and the spiritual life of the individual. The tendency is strictly to separate them. The riddle of the coexistence, in Germany, of the highest philosophical, musical and artistic tradition with militarism, gigantic business developments, etc., exists only for the westerner. No problem is involved or will ever be involved for a German—or for a Russian. Lutheranism is built upon the sharp

contrast and unalterable coexistence of mystical faith and grace on the one hand, and of sin and sword on the other. The point about their coexistence is that no compromise is sought between them. Western thought also inevitably admits the coexistence of sin and grace. But from Catholic times onwards, the tendency always was to seek a compromise. From the eastern point of view, it is precisely the attempt to deny the abyss between sin and grace which yet necessarily belong to one another, that characterizes the west as hypocritical, pharisaical, incapable of any serious mystical experience.

It is also in this Lutheran fundamennt and in its parallels in the eastern Church, that the explanation must be sought for those amazing, sudden and complete transitions from an introverted to an extraverted life and vice versa. It is entirely futile to deny that the Germans are a nation of thinkers and poets. They are. It is equally futile to deny that the so-called Prussian tradition of conquering militarism is deeply ingrained. And it is also futile to deny that exactly the same apparent contradiction exists in the Russian make-up. The gap which divides the age of Goethe and Beethoven from that of Bismarck and Hitler is of the same kind as the gap between the age and thought of Dostoevski and Tolstoy and that of Lenin and Stalin. The eastern Christian civilizations have a Janus-face. The west has not. That gives the west its logicality, its coherent tradition, its ideology of gradual progress. It gives the east its mystical depth, its incalculability, its dread and cruelty.

Finally, the sharp severance between the mystical and the worldly experience in the eastern conception of the world invariably tends to find expression in the emergence of esoteric leading groups sharply severed from the esoteric mass life. After all, it was the pneuma coming upon the disciples at Pentecost which formed the first Christian community, which was an eastern community. It was not a belief in dogmas, nor—least of all, even—a belief in any kind of moral law. It was a mystical experience, utterly obvious to those who shared it as an unalienable possession, and utterly incomunicable to those who did not have the spirit.

The spirit of the closed group with an esoteric doctrine has always remained very near to the Christian East-Lutheran or 'orthodox'. In Russia as in Germany everything of any importance

tends to convert itself into an esoteric mystical experience, shared by a community possessing the same 'pneuma'. Whether the philosophy of these communities is noble or vile, Christian or materialistic or racist, whether they group themselves round a holy Starets, round an intentionally inaccessible poet such as Stephan Georg, round the cheapest cheat, or round bodies such as the S.S.—apparently simple police, in fact a secret society with an esoteric doctrine—makes no difference in this one respect. The essential thing is that they are all bound together till death in their secret doctrines and that, from the heights of their esoteric wisdom, they look down upon the ordinary men and women of their own nations, but even more so upon the west, with an abysmal contempt.

Many strains of both German and Russian history can, I believe, be understood from this angle. But I must stop here. Only one more thing needs saying. The specific eastern trends here analysed go back over several thousand years. They are essentially independent of rational formulæ, and, as in the case of Lutheranism, perfectly capable of breaking through the crust of an entirely alien western ideology. They are intrinsically impermeable to a western rationalistic approach, however brilliant disciples both Prussia and Russia have proved to be in matters of western technique. These eastern Christian trends constitute a self-sufficing approach to life which cannot be interfered with to any appreciable extent. It will, I believe, make history in conjunction with and in opposition to the west for a very long time to come.

## ALDOUS HUXLEY

# THE MINIMUM WORKING HYPOTHESIS

RESEARCH into sense-experience—motivated and guided by a working hypothesis; leading, through logical inference to the formulation of an explanatory theory; and resulting in appropriate technological action. That is natural science.

No working hypothesis means no motive for research, no

reason for making one experiment rather than another, no way of bringing sense or order into the observed facts.

Contrariwise, too much working hypothesis means finding only what you already *know* to be there and ignoring the rest. Dogma turns a man into an intellectual Procrustes. He goes about forcing things to become the signs of his word-patterns, when he ought to be adapting his word-patterns to become the signs of things.

Among other things religion is also research. Research into, leading to theories about and action in the light of, non-sensuous, non-psychic, purely spiritual experience.

To motivate and guide this research what sort and how much of a working hypothesis do we need?

None, say the sentimental humanists; just a little bit of Words-worth, say the nature-worshippers. Result: they have no motive impelling them to make the more arduous experiments; they are unable to explain such non-sensuous facts as come their way; they make very little progress in charity.

At the other end of the scale are the Catholics, the Jews, the Moslems, all with historical, one-hundred-per-cent revealed religions. These people have their working hypothesis about non-sensuous reality; which means that they have a motive for doing something about it. But because their working hypotheses are too elaborately dogmatic, most of them discover only what they were initially taught to believe. But what they believe is a hotch-potch of good, less good and even bad. Records of the infallible intuitions of great saints into the highest spiritual reality are mixed up with records of the less reliable and infinitely less valuable intuitions of psychics into the lower levels of non-sensuous reality; and to these are added mere fancies, discursive reasonings and sentimentalisms, projected into a kind of secondary objectivity and worshipped as divine facts. But at all times and in spite of these handicaps a persistent few have continued to research to the point where at last they find themselves looking through their dogmas, out into the Clear Light of the Void beyond.

For those of us who are not congenitally the members of an organized Church, who have found that humanism and nature-worship are not enough, who are not content to remain in the darkness of ignorance, the squalor of vice or the other squalor of respectability, the minimum working hypothesis would seem to run to about this:

That there is a Godhead, Ground, Brahman, Clear Light of the Void, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestations.

That the Ground is at once transcendent and immanent.

That it is possible for human beings to love, know and, from virtually, to become actually identical with the divine Ground.

That to achieve this unitive knowledge of the Godhead is the final end and purpose of human existence.

That there is a Law or Dharma which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end.

That the more there is of self, the less there is of the Godhead; and that the Tao is therefore a way of humility and love, the Dharma a living Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness. This, of course, accounts for the facts of history. People like their egos and do not wish to mortify them, get a bigger kick out of bullying and self-adulation than out of humility and compassion, are determined not to see why they shouldn't 'do what they like' and 'have a good time'. They get their good time; but also and inevitably they get wars and syphilis, tyranny and alcoholism, revolution, and in default of an adequate religious hypothesis the choice between some lunatic idolatry, such as nationalism, and a sense of complete futility and despair. Unutterable miseries! But throughout recorded history the great majority of men and women have preferred the risk—no, the positive certainty—of such disasters to the tiresome whole-time job of seeking first the kingdom of God. In the long run, we get exactly what we ask for.

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STUART GILBERT

## THE LATIN BACKGROUND OF JAMES JOYCE'S ART<sup>1</sup>

By the death of James Joyce three years ago, the world lost a rare artist, and France a faithful friend and warm admirer. And if this Irishman, who like the hero naming his best-known work had

<sup>1</sup> This article was written to be translated into French for *Fontaine*, where it will soon appear.

travelled widely and known the cities and customs of many men, once he was free to choose, chose without hesitation Paris for his home, and in that city spent his last twenty years—the happiest of his life, as he once told me, despite frequent trouble with his sight, and many painful operations—it was, as I shall suggest in the following pages, more than the obvious amenities of life, the sparkle in the air of Paris, that drew him there. A humanist in the Latin and Catholic tradition, he had a natural affinity with the French genius, and in no atmosphere other than that of Paris could he have breathed so freely.

No great writer of his generation was the focus of more hostility and more adulation—hostility and adulation alike beside the mark in many cases. One can understand the protests of those who were shocked by the occasional presence, in what now ranks as his masterpiece, *Ulysses*, of passages where the narrative or language is conventionally ineffable. Such protests were as inevitable as the uproar at the *première* of the *Sacre du Printemps*, when many far from squeamish music-lovers were genuinely outraged by its pagan clamour. But, actually, there was no justification for the charge of incoherence brought against *Ulysses*, or for the ascription of its author to what I have called in my *Study of 'Ulysses'* the 'harum-scarum school' of writers; writers who let their subliminal selves take charge, and produce texts like the effusions of a medium at a spiritualist séance. Not that such effusions lack flashes of real beauty, new constellations of ideas, and splendid intimations. The automatic scripts published by the Society for Psychical Research in its golden age, some forty years ago, abound in such passages. And some of the finest poems of the decades between the wars owe much of their emotional drive to an uprush from the deeper layers of consciousness.

But, though Joyce frequently employed such material, he was never mastered by it. He was always lucid, logical; the beauty he aimed at, and achieved, was a static beauty according to the definition of Aquinas, quoted by him in his earlier, autobiographical novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: *Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur, integritas, consonantia, claritas.*

He was, in fact, of the great lineage of Latin writers, and it is interesting to find that his earliest extant composition is an

English version of Horace's Thirteenth Ode, Lib. III, made by him at the age of fourteen, and beginning:

'Brighter than glass Bandusian spring.'

The last three lines have a curious felicity, remarkable when we consider their maker's youth:

'Be of the noble founts! I sing  
The oak-tree o'er thine echoing  
Crags, thy waters murmuring.'

(Compared with Milton's juvenile version of the Fifth Ode, Lib. I, *Ad Pyrrham*, the Joycean rendering outdoes, by every standard, the Miltonic.)

It is fashionable nowadays to make little of a classical education, but for a writer, anyhow, in the English tongue no less than for his colleague across the Channel, a classical background (not necessarily a profound knowledge of Greek and Latin) is as desirable as the knowledge of harmony to a musician. Joyce often spoke to me with appreciation of the instruction he received at Belvedere College, a Jesuit school in Dublin, to which he came at the age of eleven. There, in addition to a thorough grounding in the classics, he acquired a working knowledge of Italian and French, which was to serve him well in later years. Each week the boys had to produce an essay on a set subject, and it is interesting to find that Joyce, required to write on 'My Favourite Hero', chose Ulysses.

His favourite Greek poet was Homer and, unlike most student-philosophers of that generation, he preferred Aristotle to Plato. Thus in the dialectic 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode of Ulysses, Aristotle, the Rock, is contrasted with the Platonic Whirlpool, and some gentle ridicule is directed on the Celtic Twilight school, and its fumblers behind the veil. But his natural bent, as I often noticed in our conversations, was less towards the Greek than to the Latin poets; Horace's elegant simplicity, Vergil's jewelled phrases.

His first published work was a small volume of poems, exquisite in form, entitled *Chamber Music*. Dwarfed by the symphonic structures of his later period, these poems have received less than their due. 'They taste mildly of Swinburne and Symons and Yeats and the Celtic fog;' thus a not unsympathetic critic writes of them. Rather, to my mind, they smack

of Ben Jonson, Horace, and Horace's forerunners and models, the Greek lyric poets. And, even more, of the great French poets of the nineteenth century, whose subtlety of phrasing and musical effects they equal, and sometimes excel.

'One evening,' writes Mr. Frank Budgen in *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, his fascinating reminiscences of Joyce during his residence at Zurich (1915-1919), 'in my studio in the Seefeldstrasse Paul Suter recited that poem of Verlaine which begins:

*Les roses étaient toutes rouges  
Et les lierres étaient tout noirs.  
Chère, pour peu que tu te bouges,  
Renaissent tous mes désespoirs.*

Joyce asked him to repeat it.

"That," he said, "is perfection. No more beautiful poem has ever been made."

And, in reading the poems in *Chamber Music*, one is conscious behind their classical form, of a mingling of two strains three centuries apart, that of the Elizabethan Phoenix Nest and that of the French lyric poets of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In a notebook which he had started in Paris in 1902, and which has happily been preserved—excerpts are given in Mr Gorman's excellent biography of Joyce—there is a brief entry, rich in intimations of the Joycean outlook, not only on culture, but also on the art of letters. It is five words long. '*Greek culture (Iliad); Barbarism (Bible)*'.

The effects of the Reformation in England on our literature were far-reaching, and the latter would certainly have taken a very different course but for the great apostasy. Especially important was the part played by the magnificent versions of the Old Testament in moulding the form and language of our writers. The Catholic tradition of limpidity, *consonantia et claritas*, was swept aside, and our idiom put on a Joseph's coat of Oriental stuff, loosely woven, vivid and barbaric. If, like the writer, one has translated much from the French, one realizes how inapt the biblical turn of phrase—perceptible to some degree in almost all the best English writing—is for the faithful rendering of a French original. Irish writers, however, owing to their Catholic allegiance, have been relatively immune from

these 'barbaric' influences. Surprising as it may seem, the translation of *Ulysses* into French—in which I had the privilege of assisting MM. Valéry Larbaud and Auguste Morel—went with unlooked-for ease, once the full implications of the text had been unravelled by the translators. For in *Ulysses*, one of the best ordered, most rational literary masterpieces the world has known, the Latin spirit prevails and the strict logic of the old religion. *Ex Oriente Lux* is only literally true; the sun of reason rose on the northern shore of the Mediterranean.

Flaubert is one of the three or four authors whose every line Joyce claimed to have read, and his second book, *Dubliners*, published in 1914, a collection of *nouvelles*, if superficially resembling Maupassant's or Tchekov's tales, has a texture and technique far more akin to Flaubert's. We are often reminded of the interest in, and respect for, their material shown by great sculptors and painters, but, in the case of writers, one is apt to forget that a like interest in words and phrasing is essential. And this interest goes farther than the mere quest of the *mot juste*, or (a harder feat) the *phrase juste*. The literary craftsman is concerned with the feel and sound and colour of the words themselves, the rhythm and pattern into which they fall. In the first paragraph of the first tale in *Dubliners*, the narrator says:

'Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work.'

And the conclusion of the last tale (*The Dead*), with its exquisite rhythm and phrasing, is no less memorable than the often-quoted final passage of the 'Anna Livia' episode in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's last and most intricate work. Snow is falling on an Irish churchyard, and in the softly cadenced prose we seem to hear the low sound of falling flakes.

'It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.'

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* appeared in 1916. An autobiographical novel, it describes with candour and extreme

precision the formative years of the young writer's life, his doubts and dreams, ecstasies and discontents. The frankness of the language was such that the Egoist Press, under whose auspices it appeared in England, was unable to find printers bold enough to set it up, and finally sheets had to be imported from America. Yet in the course of the discussion on æsthetics embodied in *The Portrait*—discussions whose verve and elegance make that abstruse subject not only lucid but exciting, in the best sense of that dubious epithet—Joyce pointed out that he was equally averse from 'pornographical' and from didactic art. These are, in his words, 'improper arts'. The creative instant is that one when the clear radiance of the æsthetic image 'is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony'. It is a 'luminous silent stasis of æsthetic pleasure'. This is, in fact, an exposition of the Mediterranean ideal which we see realized in the serene beauty of Greek statuary and temples, in the *Odyssey*, and, in lighter vein, in the Graeco-Sicilian idylls of Theocritus; in the *Aeneid* and the Horatian Odes.

As Mr. Louis Golding has well remarked in his study of Joyce (Modern Writers and Playwrights Series), 'a sense of prelude hangs over every page of *The Portrait*'. It closes with a passage from the diary of Stephen Dedalus, the young artist (i.e. Joyce himself when young); an invocation of the paternal Manes. 'Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.' (The name Joyce has given his *alter ego* is significant; that of the first artist of the Hellenic world, maker of the labyrinth of Cnossos and the honeycomb of gold.)

Any attempt to set forth in detail the classical affinities in the form and texture of *Ulysses* would take me too far afield. It may suffice to quote one of Mr. Budgen's reminiscences of Joyce at the time when *Ulysses* was in the making.

'I enquired about *Ulysses*. Was it progressing ?

" "I have been working hard on it all day," said Joyce.

" Does that mean that you have written a great deal?" I said.

" Two sentences," said Joyce.

'I looked sideways, but Joyce was not smiling. I thought of Flaubert.

" You have been seeking the *mot juste*?" I said.

" No," said Joyce, " I have the words already. What I am seeking is the perfect order of the words in the sentence. There is an order in every way appropriate. I think I have it."

"‘What are the words?’ I asked.

“I believe I told you,” said Joyce, “that my book is a modern *Odyssey*. I am now writing the *Lestrygonians* episode, which corresponds to the adventure of Ulysses with the cannibals. My hero is going to lunch. But there is a seduction motive in the *Odyssey*, the cannibal king’s daughter. Seduction appears in my book as women’s silk petticoats hanging in a shop window. The words through which I express the effect of it on my hungry hero are: ‘Perfume of embraces all him assailed. With hungered flesh obscurely, he mutely craved to adore.’ You can see for yourself in how many different ways they might be arranged.”

This careful thought for the verbal lay-out is characteristically Latin; the syntax of the Latin tongue gives almost infinite possibilities of this nature, of which Vergil, for instance, took full advantage, one of his greatest talents being that of well-placed emphasis. English writers usually content themselves with the obvious and simplest order of words—which makes, of course, for fluent reading. But the mind, to use Joyce’s expression in *The Portrait*, is not ‘arrested’.

Common to *Ulysses* and the *Wake* is a quality which the author himself indicates (in the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ episode) when he describes the former as ‘a chaffering all-including most farra-ginous chronicle’. Joyce’s admiration for Flaubert has already been mentioned and this all-including quality is present also in what many regard as Flaubert’s greatest work, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, to which a very interesting preface by M. Raymond Queneau was published in a recent issue of *Fontaine*. In the course of this preface M. Queneau writes:

*‘Comme œuvre encyclopédique d’imagination et comme œuvre d’imagination encyclopédique, Bouvard et Pécuchet se place dans une autre lignée, et qui n’est pas si loin de la précédente (i.e. that of the *Cena Trimalchionis* and *Don Quixote*), celle qui va de Rabelais à Joyce, lignée parallèle, car Rabelais pour le monde chrétien, Flaubert et Joyce pour le monde bourgeois font tinter aussi le glas joyeux des enterrements de première classe. De même, à leur façon, le *Satyricon* et *Don Quichotte* sont des sommes et des enseignements encyclopédiques.’*

In the decade preceding the appearance of the *Wake* I saw much of Joyce. His sight was giving constant trouble—there were times when he was almost blind—and I spent many interesting afternoons deciphering for his benefit the innumerable notebooks of all shapes and sizes in which he had jotted down

words, phrases and scraps of miscellaneous information to be embodied in what was then known as his 'Work in Progress'. His skill in placing these was as remarkable as his exact memory of the long, intricate text already in existence. He could always say promptly to which page of the typescript to turn, and the position on the page of the sentence in which the word or word-group was to be included. These miscellanea were culled from a variety of sources, from Irish newspapers, conversations overheard, magazines, guide-books, the rag-bag of journalism and *ouvrages de vulgarisation* in many languages.

In '34 or '35 the Joyces decided to spend the summer months at an English watering-place, their choice fell on Torquay, and we joined forces with them. The hotel selected by Joyce was of the kind the French describe as '*un palace*', and this did not surprise me; in the period during which I knew him, the last phase, Joyce had no relish for bohemianism, appreciated dignified surroundings and good service. (He sometimes half humorously claimed, like the early Irish ollavs, to have the gift of foresight, and perhaps knew it was a time for gathering roses before the storm broke.) When in Paris, I could never persuade him to set foot in such places as the *Dôme* or the *Coupole*; unlike myself, he had quite outgrown the naïve delights of promiscuity, and almost the only restaurant he patronized during those last years was *Fouquet's*.

But, at Torquay, he spent many hours in the 'locals', and while we talked together, I could see that he was missing nothing of the gossip going on around us. (Petronius, one may imagine, collected the material for his Banquet in much the same manner.) Like the musician who can follow simultaneously yet individually the lines of an intricate counterpoint, Joyce could follow several conversations at once, while himself taking part in one. His defective sight was, as I often noticed, counterbalanced by an extraordinarily acute ear.

On these occasions the question of what drinks to order was something of a problem. Joyce never drank anything but white wine or, occasionally, a well-diluted Pernod, and naturally enough a Devonshire public-house could offer neither. Usually we exchanged our tankards of beer or cider surreptitiously when I had emptied mine.

Besides the 'locals' the small stationers' shops were often

visited by Joyce, who would come out with a sheaf of periodicals, boys' and girls' papers, comic strips and the like, which he would examine minutely, advertisements and all, on his return to the hotel. It was amusing to see the puzzled glances of the people in the lounge, wondering what this austere, scholarly-looking man with the greying hair found to interest him in such puerilities.

Quite a large section of *Finnegans Wake* is devoted to children's games. Joyce always went back to prototypes and in games we have a foretaste of most adult proclivities, ranging from war, the *reductio ad absurdum* of the 'little victims' pastimes on their historic playing-fields, to psychical research and dialectics.

I do not think that Joyce looked for much appreciation of his last great work from the intellectuals; indeed, he was sometimes amused by their attempts to read into it a metaphysical or 'social' doctrine. During the decade in which fragments of 'Work in Progress' were appearing in *Transition* or in booklet form, fumes of the wrath to come began to cloud æsthetic judgement and, much as in my childhood, a work of art was esteemed not on its merits but for its moral tone, so critics of the 'thirties—many of them young enough to know better—judged the work of their contemporaries by its (supposed) social or political trend. In fact gaiety was as sternly reprobated by them as by those elderly Victorians who scowled at the frivolity of the 'nineties and had their revenge in the harrying of Wilde. Sometimes, when I had painfully deciphered a word or phrase in one of the notebooks, Joyce would ask me to read over the passage in which he meant to place it, and, looking round, I would see him lying on the sofa (in one of those languid, odalisque-ish postures that came naturally to him), convulsed with laughter.

One evening, I remember, when I was at his flat, a Dubliner dropped in—a large, rubicund man who, I gathered, travelled in Irish whiskey—and told Joyce he had had a good chuckle over a bit of 'Work in Progress' he had come across, and was pleased to meet its author. When Joyce recited to him one or two passages, to me particularly obscure, the Irishman kept exclaiming with delight at the topical allusions, guffawing loudly at the latent improprieties. The contrast between this genial Dubliner's behaviour and the deferential awe, sealed mouths and hungry eyes of the young *avant-gardistes* when the Master deigned to recite to them, was entertaining—and it was obvious which

type of auditor Joyce preferred. When he said to Mr. Max Eastman, 'The demand I make of my reader is that he shall devote his whole life to reading my works', there was certainly a mischievous twinkle behind the speaker's thick-lensed glasses.

I doubt if anyone outside his family may claim to have known Joyce really intimately in the 'thirties, the period during which I saw so much of him. With the coming of world-wide fame and relative affluence, he had outgrown the rancours and somewhat priggish affectations of young Stephen Dedalus, achieved detachment, and come to view the world in general as a vale of laughter. (Not the laughter that bespeaks the vacant mind, but the understanding humour of the sage, who sees that much is for the jest in the queerest of all possible worlds.) It was in this mood that he wrote *Finnegans Wake*—primarily to amuse himself, and incidentally such others as might care to play with him. It is no satire, for the satirist is, or claims to be, moved by indignation, nor is it a mere *sottisier*, a pageant of the nonsense proliferating in the newspapers, on the air—and doubtless in these remarks of mine. 'To insist on every particular were one of Hercules' labours, there's so many ridiculous instances, as motes in the sun. *Quantum est in rebus inane!*' Joyce undertook this labour, and the obscurity of his Anatomy of Folly is mainly due to his thorough dehydration of the mass of sodden matter ready to his hand. Finnegan, it may be remembered, took no water with his whiskey.

With its manifold resemblance to a Greek city State, to the Athens of Pericles or George Moore's *Nouvelle Athènes*, the city of Dublin was an ideal setting for such a synthesis of modern life as Joyce attempted both in *Ulysses* and in the *Wake*, and he was in the exact sense of the word a *political* man, a man of one city, his home town as we say. For national affairs he had little interest; for international, none at all. When asked by a patriotic friend if he would not die for Ireland, he replied ironically: 'I say: Let Ireland die for me!' (This remark is embodied in *Ulysses*.) But I can well believe that in his youth Joyce might have taken arms against a rival city, Cork or Belfast for instance, had it violated his metropolis.

As for the war of 1914–18, during which the composition of *Ulysses* was constantly in progress, it might have been raging in another planet for all the interest Joyce took in it. He had what appears to be the attitude of some of his compatriots today

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towards the present conflict, and I remember his singing to me one evening in his flat of happy memory (in that quiet Parisian backwater of the Square Robiac) a parody, made while he was sheltering in Zürich from the European storm, of the comic song 'Mr. Dooley'—the last lines of which were:

‘A plague on both your houses!  
Says Mr. Dooley-ooley-ooley-oo’.

The local love that many lavish on a fatherland was focused by Joyce on his mother-city, Dublin. Indeed, as Mr. Connolly pointed out fifteen years ago in his penetrating study of Joyce's work (*Life and Letters*), he had for Dublin all the *pietas* of a Vergil for Augustan Rome—and, it may be added, that of a Parisian for the immortal city which is, in Joyce's words, ‘a lamp for lovers lit in the wood of the world’. As Vergil in the Aeneid linked up the origins of Rome with Troy, and of the westering of the Trojan exiles, made a new Odyssey, so Joyce, in his *Ulysses*, linked up his city with Homeric legend, and made yet another Odyssey of his wandering hero's periplus in Dublin.

And yet, with all his *pietas*, when Joyce died in Zürich on 13 January, 1941, he had not set foot in his native city for over thirty years. ‘As a matter of fact,’ Mr. Gorman writes, ‘he had never left Dublin; he carried it about with him wherever he went, in his heart, in his brain, in nostalgic returns of the mind.’ There was a good reason for his absence in the flesh. When the Four Years’ War ended and return was practicable, his own people would have none of him; it was the old story of the prophet without honour, the poet banished from his city state. I remember his telling me on more than one occasion, that he might well suffer physical violence were he to reappear amongst those Dubliners whom, to their thinking, he had traduced in his book of that name. Also it was a period when nationalist feeling ran high, and Joyce had made it clear time and again that he was no nationalist. The ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses* is a biting parody, Rabelaisian in tone, of nationalist pretensions. The spirit of nationalism is embodied in a brawny, truculent Sinn Feiner—avatar of the giant Polyphemus, terror of the Bay of Naples and a personification of the volcano—who belches and erupts, and finally hurls a biscuit-tin at the head of the new Odysseus, much-enduring Mr. Bloom.

Joyce feared, and perhaps rightly feared, the reactions of the Dublin crowd to the world-famous exile, were he to return. (Thus in *Ulysses*, Mr. Bloom, thinking of a nostalgic wanderer's homecoming: 'Still, as regards return, you were a lucky dog if they didn't set the terrier at you directly you got back'.) Like many men of rare intelligence he had some curious phobias—of nuns in threes, of dogs, and, above all, of crowds. But I remember remarking that a French crowd troubled him little, whereas an Anglo-Saxon crowd inspired him with fear. For such a crowd, if perhaps less impulsive than a Latin one, is particularly liable to the mass-neurosis deemed righteous indignation—in part the outcome of its Protestant background, in which that monument of noble wrath and bloody vengeance, the Old Testament, bulks large; and, in part, due to its simple faith in hearsay. For all its vehemence, the French crowd has a saving, ingrained scepticism, deriving from the millennia of culture behind each individual; and Joyce had an instinctive sympathy with the sceptical mind. He was, in fact, of the lineage of Montaigne. 'The prevailing attitude of *Ulysses*', as Mr. Budgen sees it, 'is a very humane scepticism—not of tried human values, necessary at all times for social cohesion, but of all tendencies and systems altogether.' And it was largely, I believe, this humane scepticism that drew Joyce to Paris, in whose congenial atmosphere he devoted his last twenty years to the composition of *Finnegans Wake*, that *summa profana* of world-history, culture, humanity and humour, his Testament and, it may be posterity will judge, his greatest work.

CHRISTOPHER SYKES

## WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?

### VI—PERSIA

MY DEAR JOHN,

There are (or were, and probably will be again) two ways of going to Persia: the western route by Syria, Baghdad, and Kasr i Shirin; and the northern route by Russia, arriving at the little Caspian port of Pahlevi. I would recommend the western route,

for arriving thus your first view of Persia is of immense ranges of hills, your first experience a weary climb on to a plateau, your first sentiment amazement at the radiant beauty of a gaunt and delicately coloured land. The whole of the immense area of the Iranian plateau (it includes South Afghanistan) is strangely uniform in structure and the landscape you will meet on the Road to Kirmanshah, wide plains set about with mountain ranges, does not differ in essentials from what you will see in the Gulf province or in Khorassan, nearly a thousand miles away. Before you leave Persia you should visit the Caspian provinces: the Turkoman prairie in Transcaspia and the great virgin forests on the southern shore, but these are exceptional places, no part of the geographical Persia; and so, as you follow the road to Teheran from Baghdad, look carefully, and make up your mind if you can bear to live with this landscape, because you are going to find precious little else.

Where had you better live? You have a familiar kind of choice before you: the semi-European life of Teheran or the more or less unchanged Persian life of one of the provinces. Twenty years ago you or I would have fairly plumped for the changeless, the profoundly national, but today belief in the *Zeitgeist* is stronger than it was and with it a fear that the act of burying oneself in a remote picturesqueness might mean missing all sorts of 'interesting modern movements'. Well, as far as Persia is concerned I should not let the interesting modern movements of Teheran unduly worry you. Although Persia has a deep racial unity and a habit of uniform servility to the State formed by centuries of autocratic rule, the political cohesion of the provinces and the capital is extremely weak. The Persians are very brilliant people, their abiding fault is superficiality, and if you live in Teheran you will soon form a wholly erroneous picture of a modernized country alive with political passions, a picture which will effectually obscure the fact that you are living in a primitive society. Perhaps I can best explain this by saying that although Persia has been civilized for far longer than we have, the idea, the primitive idea, that civilization is a question of ornament has never given way to a nobler conception, that their system of government has only very lately and, so far, ineffectively, turned aside from a career of barbarous autocracy, and that the effects of shallow philosophy and uninterrupted tyranny have resulted

in a stultification of the soul which will require many generations to overcome. Teheran might obscure this from you; provincial life will make it plain. I suggest that you begin by living in Teheran and then move to some of the provincial capitals. I would suggest Meshed, Yazd, and Isfahan.

And now I suppose I should tell you about the Persians. I am a little loth to do this as there are, you will probably agree, fewer more treacherous pitfalls into pretentious fatuity than generalizations on peoples. The Paphlagonians, we are assured, are intensely artistic, easily aroused to anger, have an ungovernable mania for cheese cakes, and ill-treat their mules. We accept it all open mouthed; but when some deep observer writes about ourselves we begin to see what drivel this sort of stuff can be. I was cured of the habit when I read, in a book on London by Paul Morand, that as fire engines drive through our streets an awful hush descends on the crowd while we go through the agonies of inherited memories of the great fire. Yet it is difficult in a letter to avoid generalizations, and if I make any I will ask you to take them with a pinch of salt.

One of the first things you will notice in your Persian experience is how often you are confronted with extreme contrasts. Persia is a land of great heat and great cold, of luxurious orchards and howling deserts, of feasts and starvation; and nowhere do these juxtapositions strike you more forcibly than in the characters of the people. You will of course read *Hajji Baba of Isfahan*, that great and unique English novel of Persian life. Although it was written by James Morier well over a hundred years ago, it remains still an authentic and strangely exact picture, but it is important to recollect that it is incomplete. Morier's sense of humour ran away with him and, as his other books show, there was a strain of the coarse bully in this wonderfully but so incompletely sensitive observer. He seems to have been largely unaware of the beauties of Persian art and literature and any flash of nobility in a Persian soul would have been dismissed by him as an hallucination. So don't, as so many people do, take Morier as infallible but rather as a great and tolerant recorder of human weakness. In Persia I have met, as you will, many men who might have stepped out of *Hajji Baba*, but I have also met there a few of the finest and most loyal men in the world. You will be shocked, as others have been, by faithlessness, treachery, a habit

of swindling, a detestable disregard for the truth. There is more amorality in Persian life than you will find in most other places. The commonest virtue, not the noblest one, is a laughing sceptism, but before you join the chorus of high-minded indignation of the European colony, just remember this: the Persians have lived through a period of more abominable tyranny under Reza Shah than any in their recent history: that old hoaxter succeeded in taking in a large number of Europeans with the 'vigorous new era' he was supposed to be introducing into his country, but he *never* succeeded in deceiving his own subjects. I agree that that is a negative virtue but would it not be most valuable nearer home today? Be prepared for complexity in Persian character, don't be deceived by apparent simplicity. Expect the worst always. You'll meet it, but you will get some pleasant surprises.

The Persians' own view of themselves is contradictory and revealing. They have no illusions about themselves, as a rule: their amorality is productive of a kind of honesty. It is a strange thing that the two most famous English books about Persia, *Hajji Baba* and Lord Curzon's great work, books in which overpowering denunciations of the Persians can be found, are greatly enjoyed in Persia, particularly *Hajji Baba*, which has frequently been translated. Persians will often tell you how wicked the Persians are. But the easiest error is to mistake this candour for pusillanimity or a wretched absence of self-respect. There is side by side with it an intense racial pride whose origins are lost in remote time. All the shocks to self-esteem which hard fortune, and the phenomenal incapacity of Persian governments over the last hundred years, have drawn upon the country, have been unable to shake a mystical and impressive belief in the Iranian Race—the Aryans of old (you can imagine how German propaganda got off to a flying start). This racial pride, this sense of being part of the aristocracy of mankind, is nearly always present. Centuries of use have shorn it of self-conscious arrogance: there is no 'colour-bar' nonsense in Persia, there is very little anti-Semitism. Lord Curzon talks of a racial anti-Turanianism. I may have missed it myopically, but I have never noticed it in present-day Persia. It may have vanished with the fall of the Turkish dynasty. Indeed, anti-Armenianism, which is very strong, and anti-Zoroastrianism (though only found in

Yazd and Kerman as far as I have been able to make out) are the only forms of unreasoning intolerance in which Persia, once a scene of continual and widespread persecution, now indulges. By intolerance I mean sentimental intolerance, it is many years since there has been an organized persecution of a racial or religious minority. In brief, I may conclude by saying that Persian self-esteem is not an unwholesome form of pride. I will have more to say about Persian self-criticism in a moment.

Let me now consider what the Persians will think of you. You are not on a wholly 'bad wicket'. When all is said and done England still enjoys an enviable reputation in Persia. We are still remembered as the people who obtained relief from autocracy in 1907, as the organizers and promoters of freedom and justice in the world. During the xenophobia of Reza Shah's reign indignation was often expressed that a predominantly British company should exploit the country's immense oil resources, but for all that Persians remain favourably impressed by the British company's fair dealing with its partners. I do not think I am being over optimistic when I say that at the present time most Persians see British participation in the Persian oil industry not as an affront to national sovereignty but as some guarantee of justice for themselves in the years ahead. Oh yes, I know dozens of Persians who feel differently, but, having recourse to your salt, I think you will find that generalization a not utterly preposterous guide. You need not feel shy or awkward, you will be accepted from the very first as an *ami de la maison*.

So, John, you may stroll in and hang up your hat and coat and warm your hands at the fire or ask for the window to be opened and so on without fear of seeming to take liberties, for your manners, like mine (and this the Persians do insist on), are perfect. But—and the size of the 'but' is stupendous—don't settle down in the armchair and drop off into a doze. Friend of the house you may be, but this is a terribly unhappy household; and in the unreasonable way of the unhappy they blame you for their unhappiness as confidently as they praise you for shining virtues which you hope you possess. From the very first you are going to come in for enormous doses of praise and blame. Make up your mind on entering Persia that your life, if it is to touch Persian life at all, is to be a hectically harassed

life, a life charged with responsibilities incurred through no fault of your own, few of them involving matters which you can influence in any way, most of them laid upon you through a process of calculation which you will find, and which indeed is, utterly fantastic. And yet you should not be too surprised at the great rôle you are called upon to play. When Charles Fox identified England with the principle of liberty, when Byron died in Greece for that principle, when Macaulay evolved the pleasing theory that English history is a slow but certain process of its realization, when Gladstone confirmed this theory in Acts of State, when a British government insisted in the early years of this century that a system of liberty in Persia was a sacred condition of friendship, they lit fires of hope which still burn with a great glow. That splendid identification of a principle with a people should be a matter of pride for every Englishman, so much so that if you recollect their origin you should not be over distressed at some of the extraordinary results. If you live in Teheran you will often, very often, be asked why the British Embassy (always 'the Embassy' which is assumed to be the power-house of all British policy) allowed So-and-so to be made Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. When you answer that the appointment of So-and-so is no concern of the Embassy, you will be met with sly smiles and head shakings—ah, you are deep—and your safest reply will be to refer your questioners, your continual questioners, to the Ambassador, who will not thank you. When you are in Isfahan be prepared to be asked why thingummy, a famous blackmailer, a proclaimed thief, the jackal of the jackals, was allowed by the Embassy to be appointed postman in the city. It is all extremely difficult, you are placed quite unfairly in an impossible position, and yet there is a kind of logic about it. Persian self-criticism looks with admiration, longing, and anger, at British Liberalism. In 1907—that is the date you must never forget—England did the unbelievable: she obtained a respite for Persia from the iniquitous autocracy, and so, it follows, England the cornucopia is now responsible for weal or woe. There was joy and acclaim when the fire was lit in Persia. That was gratifying to the admirable men who had produced the unspeakable novelty—a box of matches. But unfortunately for them and their successors a wail of agony, a howl of rage, a focusing of angry eyes upon them, follows the

failure to illumine and warm up every damp log. Have I made myself at all clear? Remember what is so little known in England, that British and Persian fortunes have been indissolubly bound together, in commerce, in politics, in moral problems, for over fifty years. I have been drawn into generalizations. Have another pinch of salt and read on.

You start off your Persian career in Teheran. Well, your first impressions will, I am sure, be good. Only ten years ago they would have been bad. At that time Teheran was a hideous semi-Russianized Asiatic village without one redeeming architectural feature, unless you allow a few artistically degenerate though picturesque mosques. The present town is an astonishing example of how modern planning and supposedly unadaptable artistic traditions can be beautifully combined. If ever a modern Islamic style will be evolved, Teheran and not Cairo or Ankara will surely witness the first flowering. And here I may briefly discuss literary and artistic movements in Persia today. Pull out the map please.

As you know, as is plain from the map, Persia is a kind of inland island. Cultural contacts with Western peoples, even with Russia, have always been of a rather tenuous kind, so you must not be surprised to find that the familiar modern influences in art and literature are hardly present at all. To begin with literature. I do not know Persian well enough to appreciate the beauties or subtleties of Persian poetry or prose except after much repetition of familiar passages, so that what I say on this subject is mostly at second hand. It appears to me that for a long time, for two hundred years, Persian poetry has been in that state of partly self-satisfied and partly irritated frivolity which succeeds a golden age. Almost any travel book you like to consult will remark on the extraordinary extent to which the classic poetry of the country is known to the people, educated or uneducated. You would be surprised to hear a lorry driver in England amusing himself on a long journey by reciting page after page of Shakespeare, Milton, or Pope. Translated into Persian terms such a thing is commonplace. Of no other nation in the world, perhaps, can the literature be so truly described as national; it is part of the everyday life of the people in a perfectly natural and awe-inspiring way. But this enviable state of affairs is not without disadvantages. Whoever writes must write in direct competition

with such Titans as Sa'adi, Rumi, Nezami and Omar Khayyám, or with that greatest of lyrical poets, Hafiz. The result has been a tendency either towards pedantry and ultra-conservatism, or towards frivolous breakaways. Opposed by the formidable achievements of the ancient poets, modern Western poets, even French ones, have made but the slightest impression on contemporary literature in Persia. (I say 'even French ones' because the strongest cultural influence in the country comes from France.) It is impossible for a foreigner to pass any sincere judgement on whether Persia, from the large mass of contemporary talent, a talent often brilliant, often satirical, but rarely deeply serious, will produce a new or great school, but I am prepared, with some diffidence, to make a guess. Persian literature has most strangely neglected the possibilities of prose. If you study Persian literature you will be surprised at how few writers have made a reputation as prose stylists. It seems possible that, in time, the example of Western prose will rouse Persian writers to a realization that all fields in the art of literature have not been conquered by them and that there are vast seas in their language for someone to be the first to burst upon. From the above I must not give you the impression that you are going to find no one to talk to about familiar literary matters. On the contrary, you will find many literary people in Teheran enthusiastic about them, but you will probably have the impression that in their Western aspect they discuss these things with you somewhat in the same spirit as you may discuss Islam with them, as something you may admire, if you like with longing, but in which you are not fitted to partake. You will find them still enthralled by that classic poetry which Theodore Watts Dunton declared might be worthy to take the first place in the lyrical literature of the whole world, were it not, in his fine phrase, that its 'wings are too heavy with beauty'.

Of music I cannot speak at all. I will only warn you that Persian music is very much more agreeable to Western ears than Arab music, largely, I think, owing to Russian influences via the Caucasus. If you are an amateur of music, I forget if you are, you may find this an exciting field of study. All Persian art, except literature, remains wonderfully receptive and never servile to foreign influences, and a musical renaissance, though I know of no sign of it, is quite a probable Persian phenomenon.

When it comes to the visual arts you will find much more sign of life, though (remember you will be on an island), not perhaps the life you will be expecting. As in literature you must not look for the effect of modern Western movements. It is true that the highly distinguished but transitory Armenian Isfahan School (finely patronized by the late Prince Firuz) owed much to French impressionist painting, but to understand the present situation of Persian artists and architects you would do well to forget the present day or its immediate forbears altogether and go back in spirit to the Gothic revival. By a complex of circumstances, very different from those of Strawberry Hill or St. Pancras, Persian artists have suddenly become intensely aware of the past. Partly owing to the violent nationalism cultivated in the reign of Reza Shah, and partly, I think more strongly, in revolt against the stupid Westernization which he ignorantly adopted as his major policy, Persians became emotionally conscious of the desirability of preserving the great monuments of their past. On the same impulse a school of painting, still thriving, grew up in Isfahan, and a State school of painting was instituted in Teheran. Miniatures poured forth as they had not done for nearly a hundred years, and the best of these productions are undoubtedly worthy to bear comparison with those of the exact and inspired Behzad. The traditions received new emphasis, but European influences, though not modern ones, continued to impose themselves slowly and subtly. With a revived interest in Persian painting and building it was inevitable that there should be a revival of tile making, which had fallen into a long and ludicrous decline. The modern tilework of Persia, except that it has not yet recaptured the glowing red of the Safawi schools (seventeenth century), is exquisite and splendid beyond praise. The mosques of Isfahan have been restored and without a trained eye it is now difficult to distinguish between the old and the new. These reconstructions and restorations are so astounding that they are apt to draw attention from what may be a more important manifestation: the modern tilework on the new buildings of Teheran in which you may see new designs emerging calmly from the interrupted imagination of the past. The buildings themselves may at first bewilder you. Let me very briefly turn to architecture. Three styles developed nearly simultaneously: first a western Russian style, then a revived ancient Persian style, and a revived Islamic style. The

Russian style: baroque, pretentious, amusing, and sometimes very endearing, has resided long and uneasily in Persia, and unless I am greatly mistaken has recently departed this life. The revived antique style was an unhappy product of Reza Shah's ignorance and nationalism. His subjects were told that Islamic art was an Arabian imposition and that the true art of Persia was only to be seen in the ruins of Persepolis. Fittingly enough the police, worthy colleagues of the Gestapo, provided the first occasion for a celebration of this stupendous misreading of history, they were housed in a huge reconstruction of what the palace of Xerxes might, with luck, have looked like. The national bank is a cleverer attempt to employ this unemployable style. Though I do not much believe in the *Zeitgeist* I think that *some* propitiation is due to this tiresome little deity, an opinion Persians share; no other Neo-Persepolis has been erected. The folly passed away with the fool who directed Persian art down this blind alley. Far more interesting than the Russian or the antique style is the revived Islamic school in which Persian architecture clearly has a great future.

For the sake of convenience it may be called an Islamic style because it started about eighteen years ago with the adaptation of mosque designs to non-religious building, the best example of which is, I think, the Municipality in Teheran. Since then considerable strides have been made. Domestic architecture in Persia has for hundreds of years conformed to simple conventions and designs. It was found that these could adapt themselves to modern notions of style with the greatest of ease, in many instances endowing empty novelty with a certain fulness and gravity of tradition; in consequence two styles began to develop rapidly, a new Perso-European style and a conservative Islamic style, the latter with its eye on the mosques, the former with its eye on the enchanting unpretentious houses of the Persians. As might have been expected the conservative style has enjoyed a calmer and easier career than the other, but the new style, owing to Persia's good fortune in having had intelligent European advisers and intelligent Persian students abroad, has been deflected into relatively few vulgarities. It is not a subject on which we can preach. And that, I think, is all I can say in a letter about architecture, art and letters.

I hope I have indicated that if you are interested in these things

and are prepared to explore an island far away from Bloomsbury or Montparnasse, you will, in Teheran at first, and later in Isfahan, find much to interest or excite you.

The immense artistic tradition of Persia is a dangerous guide however. Remember what I said about the superficiality of Persia. Her ancient civilization, her brilliant arts, her enduring grace, form a thin, dazzling, and perhaps indestructible crust, but no more than a crust. When you leave Teheran, and the splendours of Isfahan, Yazd or Meshed, you will see a nightmare world of poverty and human misery beyond imagination. Persia is no place for a quiet dreamy holiday except for an exceedingly insensitive person; for your own comfort I recommend that you have a distinct object in your travels and preferably one that you feel may, however indirectly, bring some alleviation to the ghastly wretchedness you will so often see about you. For the moment I am thinking more of your own comfort than of any humanitarian vision, for if you have never been to the East before, you are going to find the spectacle of unredeemed poverty a very painful one indeed. You will not find much 'social conscience' by way of compensation, no, on the contrary, you will find in its place an enchanting seduction of your own: Persia, more than any other society I know of, has wrought the poetry of relief from scarcity to the highest pitch of perfection. Nowhere in the world will you find so developed a sense of the oasis, the garden in the midst of the desert. You can see for yourself how this amoral ideal permits an indifference to cruelty and injustice if it is allowed to influence deeply the life of men. At the moment the poverty of the Persian poor, after the horrors of the revived autocracy, is worse than it ever was. Old travellers admired the decent standards of life enjoyed by the peasantry, and fifteen years ago, when I first saw Persia, these still obtained. It is possible that you may be able to admire them again, but I doubt it very much.

I could go on writing this letter for ever, but I question whether an infinite epistle could do more than suggest a few ideas as to what awaits you in this strange country. Persian travel used to be very cheap and is now very expensive, so before you set out let me know and I will try to get up-to-date information on the subject. You can find a flat easily enough in Teheran but it will be an eccentric flat with unlikely appointments. It is not a

comfortable country in the usual sense of the term, but very comfortable in unusual senses. Caviar is obtainable. Horses are very cheap. The landscape, except in the brief hot season in July and August, is noble and vast. It is said to bear a strong resemblance to that of Spain. Once having seen it, and this generalization I make with absolute confidence, you will, like many others, be haunted by it, and long to go back to it, for the rest of your life.

*ROBIN IRONSIDE*

## COMMENTS ON AN EXHIBITION OF ENGLISH DRAWINGS

WE cannot, equitably, pass any comparative judgement upon the achievements of English painting; it is indeed a truism that this country has never brought forth, from that moment of its history at which its culture might rightly be regarded as national, any school of painting which, in magnificence of performance, approaches the level maintained by the schools, while they flourished at all, of Italy, Spain or France. But to labour, as so many do, this platitude is to encourage the propagation of a false conception of the nature of pictorial art by attaching to what is not more than a medium or a method a standard and entirely fabricated importance; it is sometimes necessary to attempt to disabuse people of the obvious error that artistic media may be graded and pigeon-holed according to latent æsthetic properties they are supposed to possess. Appeals to artists to cultivate a sense of paint, a sympathy with the material in which they are working, are appeals for the cultivation of affinities with nothing. Since paint, or stone, yields unquestioningly to the most diverse treatment, there can be no nicety of relation requiring establishment

between them and the artist; to speak of sense or sympathy in such a context is meaningless. There is no hidden tenderness or force in the mere consistency of paint and the sculptor, in so far as he may have respected the fortuitous shape of his block presents us not with a work of art but with an *objet trouvé* and an object, moreover, that is still dependent for its interest upon what the artist has read into it rather than upon any qualities that would be immediately manifest to the ordinary eye. No higher criticism of the fine arts can properly concern itself with the artist's choice of medium; however interesting the motives may be—and they are probably more capricious than interesting—that determine this choice, they will be of limited æsthetic significance. In looking at a picture we take the risk of dulling our pleasure, and certainly we distort our critical faculty, if we allow considerations as to the validity, the legitimacy, of the medium in which it is executed to mingle with our impressions of the effect it produces. In fine art, the means, whether they be talc, sand, string or any other matter that is either specially suitable or conveniently to hand are, in any conceivable case, justifiable by the results. Elements which may make or destroy the quality of a picture do not reside in the nature of its substance; they are the elements, infinite and intangible, which make or destroy a poem or any other work of art. It cannot be required of an artist that he should allow the imprecision or the clarity of his vision to be prejudiced by the involuntary behaviour of his medium. Yet, however evident this may be, self-respecting critics will warm towards a picture that reveals an 'understanding' of the medium, will deprecate in another its immoral technique and will set up non-existent distinctions as to the effects considered proper to the various, and perhaps ephemeral, modes of expression in current use.

Estimates of the contribution of English painting to the artistic patrimony of Europe do not take account of much in the art of this country that is idiosyncratic and unique, that illustrates, in their most peculiar form, that ardour and sweetness which, together, are not the distinguishing marks of any other culture. No review could fairly be made of the masterpieces of English art that did not include a high proportion of drawings and engravings: J. R. Cozens' muted, but still Byronic, vision of the lingering presence of antiquity in the Italian landscape transmitted to us by drawings that are almost monochrome;

the universe, compressed into so small a compass, of Blake's engravings—the far-reaching scenes of the Job illustrations or the enclosed idyll of the miniature wood-cuts for Vergil; Samuel Palmer's ardent religious primitivism; the painful fragrance of early pre-Raphaelite draughtsmanship; these are valuable esoteric manifestations of national culture, and the history of art in general would be impoverished had they never been occasioned. Though one would not claim that English art rivalled the best Continental schools, if the terms of comparison are not limited to painting, but extended to cover the whole field of pictorial art, then the claim would be much less extravagant and it is clearly false to attribute to the English any pronounced relative deficiency of the visual, the pictorial sense. This is said not in any spirit of patriotism but to reinforce the view that criticism is delusive (even, possibly, within the precincts of the art school), which rests its conclusions upon the analysis and appraisal of techniques rather than effects.

English art has never progressed with any orthodoxy; it is rich in exceptional minor beauties. A representative exhibition of English drawings would always tend to be much less an illustration of first thoughts, projects and preparatory work than a collection of small finished pictures, some of them, perhaps, the masterpiece of the particular artist. The extent of these riches in public hands is by no means a matter of public knowledge. It might be a labour to explore the enormous treasures of English graphic art in the Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum and that of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum; but there can be no doubt at all that an unprejudiced excavation of their contents would uncover a native vein of lyricism, however thin, and occult to the average perception, of which the current evidence is only fragmentary. The exhibition of English drawings now being circulated by C.E.M.A.<sup>1</sup> is composed entirely of examples from the comparatively meagre collection at the Tate, one not intended to constitute a self-sufficient department of the Gallery but merely to afford a necessary comment upon and pendant to the collection of oil-paintings. Yet the quality of the exhibition is far from

<sup>1</sup> 'Two Centuries of British Drawings from the Tate Gallery' at present on view at Port Sunlight; the exhibition will subsequently be shown at Kendall, Malvern, Stoke-on-Trent, Southport, Liverpool.

suggesting this dependent character. Rossetti's *Hesterna Rosa*, which it includes, an intricately planned picture inspired by a song from Sir Henry Taylor's once esteemed poem *Philip van Artevelde*, is an example of the effect of that poetic breath that so often lifts the less pretentious efforts of English artists on to a curiously impassioned plane of expression impossible to define in terms of execution; the execution in this case is naïve, yet the closeness and darkness of the design, the symbol of the still caged yet rejected mistress,<sup>1</sup> convey something of the heated sophistication of *The House of Life*; *The Eve of St. Agnes* by James Smetham (1821–1889), a characteristic minor Spasmodic of the English school, illustrates the same effect, concentrating within its few square inches a range of sentiment that is at least fully in accord with Keats' poem. The art of Simeon Solomon (1840–1905) in his adolescence, two of whose drawings dating from his sixteenth and eighteenth years, are included in the C.E.M.A. exhibition, is also part of that minor lyrical tradition—if that is not too strong a word—that has been kept flickering in England ever since the end of the eighteenth century, sometimes with a wild, always with an uneasy light, by a succession of gifted eccentrics, of Little Masters,<sup>2</sup> whose peculiar beauties are still insufficiently recognized, or even undiscovered. The exhibition, in which are also more illustrious and familiar examples of English romantic drawing by Blake and Palmer, is indeed a strong suggestion of what rich returns a similar choice might be expected to yield from the great repositories at South Kensington and the British Museum.

The study of drawings may be thought to be specially relevant in the present condition of English art; the dominion of impressionism still commands allegiance from the average practitioner, an allegiance resulting, unhappily, in the neglect of the possibilities of the human figure as a subject and a mistaken faith, as an end in itself, in the life study, that is to say in the restrictions put upon knowledge by retinal impressions dimmed as these are by every condition of light and atmosphere. The artistic possibilities of the

<sup>1</sup>The drawing shows two gamblers and their mistresses, one of whom, 'yesterday's rose', remorsefully covers her face.

<sup>2</sup>David Scott, Edward Calvert, George Richmond, James Smetham, Simeon Solomon, Lady Waterford, Burne Jones (*the Flower Book*), Leighton (drawings), J. T. Nettleship, etc.

human figure, particularly of the human face, lie in the unparalleled complexity of its structure, not in the simple changes of its appearance under light and shadow by which it is not more subtly affected than are trees or houses. Almost with every breath taken, certainly with every tremor of its frame, a harmony is displaced and re-formed; every inflection of the eyes, the lips, changes the pattern of the face; the endless variety of human attitude and gesture conceived as the result of an intricate interdependence of delicate, mobile shapes is the most fruitful source of design that nature offers; it is also, of course, the eloquent mirror of human affections, and all broad simplifications of it, whatever their nobility in a particular case, must sacrifice the refinements of human sensibility which are only to be given by its exploitation. In whatever medium the artist may be working, the rendering of this variety will be a question, in the widest sense of the word, of drawing, of drawing grounded upon the knowledge that the eye acquires, not upon the impressions that it receives. Outside the swollen ranks of the English 'neo-impressionists', there are talented artists who introduce the figure into their pictures, but they incline to deal with man inhumanly, as vegetable or mineral, as merged with the physical substance of his background; there may be, perhaps, no present case for the consideration of those attributes of man which should dignify him; the failure, however, or hesitation, to articulate his features with any completeness may be due as much to a disregard of the potentialities of drawing inherited from the critical atmosphere of the recent past in which such abstract values as tone, balance, volume were elevated at the expense of the more palpable, less arid, beauties of the intricacy of nature. It is not necessarily meant that artists should apply themselves to the simple reproduction of the figure, but that it is profitable so to study and understand it that all the mutations of its detail may be turned to artistic account; there is an æsthetic perception of the human form revealed in the unnatural drawings of the youthful Millais not less than in the indiscriminating but eager realism of Alfred Stevens.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

## A HOMECOMING

WILFRED FREEMAN, the ends of a bright scarf flying behind him in the wind, roared past a postman on a bicycle. The postman's front wheel wobbled: he put down his foot and looked round at the screen of grey dust which had hidden the little red car from sight. The loose briar hedges still shook and trembled from the blast, as ripples shake against a river bank after a motor boat has passed. Meanwhile the car had passed a labourer with a horse, and the horse had reared. It passed a flock of geese, and the geese flew screaming into the briars: it passed a duck-pond, and pebbles burst backwards from the tyres and sprayed the weedy water. All down the country road a faint blue smoke remained in the summer air, and the poison smell of exhaust fumes. Once, in a wooded valley, the echo stayed for several seconds, cracking from tree to tree and rolling from hillside to hillside.

Wilfred's head, covered with smooth yellow hair, was compressed into his heavy cricketer's shoulders. His unlit pipe stuck squat and rigid from his teeth. He wore a tweed coat, flannel trousers and brown suède shoes.

Tired at last of the warm wind rushing in his ears and the dust gathering in his reddened eyes, he slowed up to a more moderate speed. Immediately he smelt the sweet dusty scent of cow parsley, and he was transported to his summer childhood; to the lanes and meadows round the vicarage and to the ripe banks of the Avon. A few minutes later he could already see the spire of Bulmer Church and the green barrows behind it. Ahead of him was the poplar avenue and the golden road striped with black shadows. He looked at his watch and saw that he had beaten his own record for the journey. He unwound his Centipede scarf, for at this speed the six o'clock sun was hot on his cheek and shoulder.

But speed had been an antidote to contemplation. Taking dangerous corners, flogging the speedometer up to 66, 67, 68, he had been able to forget his dismal destination. Now he was obliged to anticipate the dull arrival and the long dull week which must pass before he could decently demand his release. He thought of Margot and Jean and Daphne, and he recalled selected phrases

from their tribute: 'It's much better with you than with Denis'. 'I don't know what it is you do to me, darling.' 'I waited two hours, Wilf, but then I'd wait two centuries for you.' He thought of his fellowship, only yesterday announced, and of Manning's praise of his research. He thought of beer, and he smiled at all the treasures of his adult life. But, seeing the avenue suddenly before him, his smile vanished in gloom at the immediate future.

The trees began to whistle in Wilfred's ears as he drove faster—soon in such quick succession, that the noise became a shrill continuous scream. But at the end of the straight screaming mile he slowed up once more, and came to a stop in front of a public house.

'Evening, Jake,' he said loudly, shaking himself in the oak and sawdust bar.

'Good evening, Mr. Freeman,' said the landlord.

Over a pint of beer he was encouraged to disloyalty: 'Well, perhaps it *will* be a bit quiet for me,' he confessed, smiling from his lifted tankard. 'But perhaps I *need* a bit of quiet after the life I've been leading.'

In this one quarter of the child country he had established an adult rôle, the womaniser and the reckless driver. The landlord winked. Wilfred returned the wink, banged his tankard on the bar and walked out stretching to his sunlit S.S. Jaguar. He drove slowly up the windmill rise and through the long village with its thatch and three-acre green. At the top he turned into the vicarage drive, and drove still more slowly through the azalea bushes and the falling tendrils of acacia. The vicarage was surrounded by this belt of undergrowth and tree, muffled in leaves and heavy scent. At one point on the drive, sunlit red and white, appeared for a moment through the trees, deck-chairs on the lower lawn. He sighed with pure boredom, free of all affection or regret. A moment later the car emerged from the trees on to an open gravel space in front of the house.

The four deck-chairs were facing away from the house in the direction of the village. Three, by the bulge of them, were full, and he knew that the fourth had been prepared for him. Over the top of one jutted a brown panama hat, and now, from another, a face craned round to greet him, the bland myopic face of his mother.

'He's here!' she called, and her face disappeared again. It was

several seconds before the wide shapeless body appeared, for Mrs. Freeman had difficulty in rising. At the same moment her husband jumped agilely to his feet beside her, and they advanced side by side.

'Dear boy!'

Wilfred kissed the moist cheek, and then shook his father's veined and warted hand. And now he was aware of the third figure, standing discreet and graceful and at a little distance.

'You haven't met Wilfred, Juliet. Wilf, this is Mrs. Nash.'

Her face was older than he had expected: the chin was crumbling a little and there were wet porous pockets under the nose. But it was not yet resigned to the loss of youth or beauty. The eyes were young, lucid and dark; dark, unfaded hair was carefully gathered over the head.

'We *have* met', she said, showing with her smile the brightness of her teeth. 'I know I shouldn't say it, but we met when you were three.'

Wilfred laughed warmly and said, 'I'm delighted you say it. So much nicer than to be strangers.'

Mr. Freeman gave a small click of approval at this gallantry, standing with his hands clasped behind a dark grey flannel coat. Mrs. Freeman took her son's arm and led him to the chairs. He sat between his father and mother; Juliet Nash on his father's left.

'It's wonderful news, Wilfred,' said Mr. Freeman. Wilfred looked slyly at the gaunt clerical profile beside him, the cloven chin supported in its cleft by the tips of emaciated fingers.

'Yes, I'm afraid I'm delighted.'

'Afraid?' Juliet's soft voice seemed to him peculiarly suited to the summer evening, to the piping of blackbirds in the azaleas, to the golden view of Bulmer's steeple. He turned to her, sitting upright in his chair.

'Well, it wasn't at all what papa had hoped. He loathes biology.'

Mr. Freeman waved a hand, and, with the other, concealed a quick small yawn.

'No, no,' he said, 'that's putting it much too strongly. It's simply that I deprecate science unalloyed by any more humane learning.'

'But it's a whole-time job, Papa,' Wilfred grimaced, half at Juliet Nash, half at the view below him. 'If I'm going to make

any real contribution I've got to grind away for a lifetime of research.'

'It sounds rather a dry monastic life.' Juliet Nash leant far back in her chair, and Wilfred could no longer see her face. He saw her frail body and her crossed legs and her hands lying at peace on her knees.

'No need for it to be *monastic*,' he had thought of saying. But instead he said. 'To me it's the only worth-while life. One *does* something. With enough hard work one gets real, tangible results.'

'The village is playing a match against Terrington on Monday,' said Mrs. Freeman. 'They badly want you.'

'I don't know,' said Wilfred. 'It's rather a bore, you know.'

'But I thought,' said his father, 'that village cricket was the base, so to speak, of the whole pyramid.'

'I'm a bit overplayed,' said Wilfred, 'and I'm still not sure of my wrist.'

Soon a trim maid appeared, carrying a tray of lemonade and glasses.

'She's new, isn't she?' asked Wilfred, watching her pink legs moving primly against the green lawn.

'Lucy Brown's daughter,' said Mrs. Freeman. 'A scatterbrain.'

At dinner he watched these legs approaching and retreating from the table. Starched clothes were a fantasy from childhood, legacy from a shameless nursemaid in a meadow. Wilfred reflected bitterly that it is always the *next* inch one longs to see, no matter what length the skirt. Would he see it? His desire had hardly yet formed into a decision or a plan. At this moment he caught his father's grave inexpressive eye, and he turned reluctantly to join in the desultory talk.

'And when do you go back to Florence?'

Mrs. Freeman's calm voice suddenly enraged her son. The question was an insult, so clear had she made her indifference to the answer. Yet Juliet Nash answered calmly enough 'I go back in August—and I fear it may be for the last time. The Consul insists that it would be foolish to stay on.'

'But Juliet, what a disaster for you.' Mr. Freeman was standing above her, pouring yellow lager into her glass. At this announcement his hand had involuntarily risen, and the frothing cataract had stopped.

'The beer, Papa!' said Wilfred sharply, and Mr. Freeman poured again.

'It *is* a trial.' Juliet Nash bent her long neck and fingered the tumbler. 'Ought I to leave my things, do you think, or try to get some of them away?'

'Get them away,' said Wilfred. 'We'll be at war before the year's out.'

'Well, but I've good friends there, you know, who would look after everything for me.' Juliet looked up at him with an expression of admitting her ignorance, yet knowing that it was no disadvantage to her. Wilfred leant back in his chair and his thumbs crept towards his armpits. At this moment his allegiance wavered; the seeds of a new plan were sown.

'But this will be *total* war, Mrs. Nash. Your Italian friends won't be able to do anything to save your property, even supposing they were to try. I'm on war-research now and I can tell you that this time it'll be no joke.'

'Unlike last time?' asked his father.

'Last time will seem a holiday,' said Wilfred firmly. 'Look . . .' he leant forward, with his arms on the table. 'I can't tell you the details, but I'm working on bacteriological warfare at Cambridge. Whole nations will be wiped out by typhus or enteric.'

'We wouldn't do that, Wilfred!' Mrs. Freeman spoke with a momentary animation. Wilfred laughed.

'Here . . .' he waved his bowler's arms round the dining-room, exhibiting the print of Leonardo's Last Supper, the solid, solid sideboard, the french windows open on a dusky garden. 'Here it seems fantastic. But I assure you it's credible enough in the laboratory. Oh, and horrible. Don't think I like it, but it's best to face facts.'

'It may be,' said Mr. Freeman.

After the ladies had left, Wilfred's father, with the faintest of conspiratorial smiles, brought out a decanter of port and passed it to him. It was thin and over-long decanted, a sad contrast to the buttery port at Downing. But Wilfred smacked his lips and murmured some politeness. This was followed by a silence which had begun to seem interminable before Mr. Freeman spoke.

'Is that accurate, Wilfred, about the typhus germs?'

'Papa, I'm afraid it is. We'll have to *win*, you know.'

'At any price?'

'I think so.'

Mr. Freeman seemed to sink lower in his chair, his long head deep in his shoulders, his arms extended on either side of his fruit plate.

When they came into the drawing-room they found the two ladies laughing.

'Dear me,' said Mrs. Freeman gaily, 'I hardly feel that we need be *very* afraid of such people.'

Wilfred noticed that in this light Juliet Nash's laughing face seemed much younger and more welcoming than before. Seeing this, his attitude to her crystallized into a definite resolution. He would try it on. He stood for a moment with his back to her, staring at books whose covers he knew by heart—Vergil, Propertius, Horace, Catullus, Ovid. Dusty memories of Latin lessons, first of all with his father in the school room and later uselessly prolonged at the expense of anatomy, made him shiver with revulsion. He turned to savour the contrast, turning from dust to flesh, from death to life. Juliet looked at him for a moment, and then away to the books behind him.

'Are you a great reader, Wilfred?' she asked.

He started at his Christian name, and, a moment later, recognized that the reaction was unpleasant. An aunt, not a lover, might have addressed him so, and he felt himself in danger of a banal familiarity which would be the very opposite of the intimacy he had planned.

'I'm obliged to read a good deal,' he said. 'But you would hardly enjoy *that* literature. This . . .' he waved at the books behind him, 'is probably more your line.'

His attack delighted him, for it was not in the tone of a nephew.

'Latin,' said Juliet, screwing up her eyes at the backs of the great dull-gold Aeneid, 'I wish I could say it *was* my line, but alas, I was too lazy as a girl.'

'And do you honestly feel the lack?' Wilfred looked down at her with a come-off-it expression, perceptive and conspiratorial. But Juliet continued to stare, a little sadly, at the books. 'Quite, quite honestly,' she said.

He felt a faint pity for her, living, as he felt, constricted by pretensions, forced to pay tribute to a culture which was closed to her. He leant with his elbows against the book-case, his head back, and stared at the three elderly people below him. He

thought of the new enteric virus and he shook his head at them in affectionate incredulity.

Mr. Freeman looked up from his book. 'It wouldn't surprise me,' he said, 'if there was a strong reaction towards the classics in the next few years.'

'I wish it the best of luck,' said Wilfred.

'You have a great contempt for Greece and Rome?' asked Juliet, looking at him again.

'I'm not such a fool. To me they are a little irrelevant, but I feel no contempt.'

'Oh, good!' said Mr. Freeman.

Wilfred laughed easily. 'Did I sound patronizing? It wasn't meant.'

'Well now,' said Juliet Nash, 'you must read *something* outside your work.'

'Newspapers, railway time-tables, advertisements and official circulars.' He grinned with a rather wolfish impudence. He had spoken the truth, but with a heavy irony which implied that it was not.

'Dear me!' said Juliet.

'And the poetry of Roy Campbell,' he added, as a firework.

'Roy Campbell! Why?' She looked at him with a much more lively interest.

'How can I say, when I don't even know the terms. To me he has "guts" and I imagine that's rare in a poet.'

Mr. Freeman looked up again and seemed on the point of speaking; but he returned to his book.

'Look, Mrs. Nash . . .' with a winning gesture of confidence Wilfred drew up a chair, sat down in it and leant towards her. 'You must think me a terrible philistine. But we poor scientists really *are* the slaves of our work. We simply haven't time for the elegances.'

'Though for cricket!' said Juliet, smiling away any possible offence.

Wilfred became more boyish. 'Oh, but I couldn't do without it. Have you no feelings for the game, for its beauty, for instance?'

'I respect it,' said Juliet. 'I am not such a blue-stocking as you think. I only wished to show that there *is* a choice.'

'I admit it. But if I must choose between these . . .' once more he waved at the Latin poets, 'and a summer afternoon on the cricket field, I can't be in doubt.'

With the faintest downward glance he exhibited his large and beefy body. 'Can you really blame me?'

'Not for a moment,' said Juliet Nash.

'He was in the Marlborough team when he was only sixteen,' said Mrs. Freeman, with an air of reacting to a cue. Wilfred frowned at this renewed attempt, or so it seemed, to reduce him to the status of 'the boy'. Then he looked speculatively at the quiet face beside him, for he was quite uncertain of the impression he had made. It was his tendency, from experience rather than by temperament, to be optimistic about his chances; but since his skill was in the achievement rather than in the preparations, it was sometimes necessary to envisage a physical struggle. And what, he reflected, can give keener pleasure than the subtle moment when paroxysms of resistance change to paroxysms of delight! Though in this case he saw that a struggle was out of the question. There must be—he had long ago made a visual appreciation of the bedroom plan—consent and silence from the start.

The maid brought in a syphon and decanter, but Wilfred paid no attention to her. His choice was made.

At half-past ten Mrs. Freeman announced that she would go to bed, and the proposal was generally accepted. A moment of shame and affection made Wilfred take his mother's arm, and conduct her to the bottom of the stairs. She leant her heavy head against his shoulder and said: 'I know it's rather dull for you, Wilf. But it's such a deep joy to have you here.'

'Mother, I love to be here.' He held her shoulders and modestly kissed her forehead.

His good-night to Juliet gently implied that an agreement had been reached, while that to his father gently pitied his ignorance of it.

His bedroom still smelt of lavender and camphor. In a book-case, half-hidden by the wardrobe, were fat bright books with schoolboys on the back—and Henty, Ballantyne, bound volumes of *The Boys' Own Paper*. Skates were rusting at the bottom of the wardrobe. Wilfred sighed with a faint shame of his intentions, and then, more heavily, in a false regret for the innocence of childhood. Standing for a moment at the window, he looked down at the white moonlit flowers and the moonlit steeple beyond the trees. And he smelt the night fragrance of tobacco plant and jasmine.

There was a P. G. Wodehouse in the small shelf beside his bed, and, lying under the eiderdown in a dressing-gown, he began to read it. From time to time he laughed or shifted in his bed or looked across at the bedroom clock. He had planned to give Juliet forty minutes—a generous allowance for undressing, bath and any other necessary preparation. But as the moment approached his stomach began to contract, and his laughter grew false and raucous. Finally he put down the book and lay gazing at the stained ceiling above him, at the giant's head, the giraffe, the ship—old shapes of childhood. Then he admitted that he had never before run so great a risk with so small an assurance of success. He tried to recall every expression of Juliet's face since his arrival; and every significant phrase she had spoken. There was no ground for confidence. Yet his private code forbade him even to contemplate a withdrawal. Once the decision had been made he knew that the attempt must follow.

In such enterprises he had learned the value of multiplying preliminary stages. Each of these stages is in itself still non-committal and yet they prepare the way for the last irrevocable step, and make it far easier to take. Thus he could now leave his bedroom; he could walk down the passage; he could go to the lavatory opposite Juliet's bedroom door, and at any point in this preparation, retreat was still open to him. The dim light was on in the passage; so it burned all night long. Wilfred walked normally, making no attempt to soften his footfalls. In the lavatory he pushed the door to leave only an inch-wide crack, and, standing with his eye to the crack, he took up his station. Soon he put his ear to the crack instead, listening, through the loud tramping of his heart, for some sound from behind the bedroom door. After a few seconds he heard a sound, but it came, not from the bedroom, but from the far dark end of the passage. It was a shuffle of slippers on the boards. Wilfred stayed at his post long enough to see his father appear under the dim bulb; then he closed and locked the door, waiting to hear the handle rattle from the other side. Instead he heard another door quietly open and close.

At first Wilfred felt only the faint surprise of unrealized expectation. Instead of coming to the lavatory, his father had gone into Juliet Nash's bedroom. *His father had gone into Juliet Nash's bedroom!* The shock was heavier for its brief delay. It

was like a noise and a fall at the same time, a cry of terror and the subsiding of the earth under his feet. 'Adultery!' 'Papa!' 'Deception!' The words thundered at him like breakers on the shore, and retreated, like spent breakers, from his intelligence. He fixed on the one word which linked him to the intelligible past, and repeated it: 'Papa, Papa, Papa,' in a stubborn attempt to understand. With each repetition the word became more treacherous, more fearful, more insubstantial.

All that this fresh shock could achieve was the recognition of an outrageous transformation, the conviction that a known world had disappeared. For minutes he groped in the new chaos, standing with his head pressed to the damp lavatory wall. It was still impossible for him to understand that the vanished world had never existed. It seemed that this action of his father's, or at least his own discovery of it, had created an instantaneous chemical transformation, destroying the previous state and creating a new and unknown substance.

The second shock followed like the delayed explosion of a fallen bomb, the shock of understanding that there had been no change. It was not true that one reality had been substituted for another: the first had never existed. The rocking-horse, the tip at the end of the holidays, the bored attendance at Bulmer Church—all these were false. He knew now that every incident of his family life would have to be uprooted and, in the light of this discovery, interpreted afresh. The small sound of an opened door would echo back through twenty years, repeating the first shock a thousand times. This awful task of reinterpretation was more than he could bear to embark on, and it was partly to postpone it that he left the lavatory and crossed to Juliet Nash's room.

His father, in sugar-stick pyjamas, was toasting his back at a merry fire. Juliet Nash was sitting up in bed, a book face downward on her knees. She was wearing a sleeveless nightgown, tied with pink ribbons at the shoulder, and her face, without make-up, looked damp and sour. Wilfred was too stupefied to notice their reaction to his intrusion. At the first sight of them, all his confused emotions had congealed into a rage.

'You bloody whore!' The first two words were hoarse and throaty; the last was a yodel.

'Please, Wilfred,' said his father sternly from the hearth. 'If you're going to be abusive, I'm the better victim.'

Wilfred turned to him. 'The parson!' he said, and now his voice was controlled. 'I'll have you defrocked before you can say "knife". I'll have you harried out of the country.'

Mr. Freeman passed his hand over his face, pressing hard and impatiently at his nose and cheeks.

'The shock's very natural,' he said. 'No doubt you should have been told, but we were hardly on those terms. Besides, you wouldn't conceivably have understood. You understood nothing all the evening, and you understand nothing now. I'm very sorry for you, but do see that the fault was in some ways yours.'

Juliet Nash was looking at Wilfred kindly, and now she nodded as if in regretful agreement.

'You had better save your sympathy for my mother,' said Wilfred, disregarding Juliet.

'Don't wake her, Wilfred,' said Juliet. 'She's tired tonight.'

He left the door open behind him and walked stiffly down the passage. He knocked on his mother's door, and, when there was no answer, he thumped and slapped at the thin green panels. 'What is it?' The voice was thick and a little plaintive. As he went in the reading lamp suddenly suffused the room with a warm light, and he saw his mother blinking at him from the pillow. He shambled to the bed, and fell on his knees beside it, groping for his mother's head.

'Heavens, Wilf! Is this my nightmare or yours?' She laughed quietly, and guided his hands to her neck. Now he began to blubber, pressing his melting face into the eiderdown. A long moan was muffled in the bedclothes. 'God—oh, God—oh, God.'

'There Wilf!' She stroked his hair. 'There Cherry! What is it. What's upset you?'

He looked up at last, his eyes swollen, his lips trembling, and said: 'Father is unfaithful to you. He goes to bed with Mrs. Nash.'

'Ah, *that's* it.' Her voice seemed a strange mixture of relief and sadness. But he knew that the sadness was for him, and not for any distress of her own. 'You must try to understand, Cherry.' She sighed and stroked him a little more firmly. 'There's so much that you haven't understood.'

'You mean you've always known. You mean that you don't mind.' She felt his body stiffen and his hands fall away from her.

'No, Wilf. I've never minded. Won't you try to understand?'

He jumped up and stood for a moment by the bed. Then he turned and ran out again into the passage.

Mrs. Freeman pulled back the bedclothes and lifted her heavy legs to the floor. With a slight involuntary groan she stooped and put on her slippers. In the guest-room she found her husband and Juliet Nash standing together at the window. Mr. Freeman beckoned to her, and the three stood pressed together, looking down on the silver lawn and on a clumsy figure shambling across it in a dressing-gown. They saw a wide cricketer's back, and swinging arms. In a few moments, this figure reached the yews which screened the garage and disappeared into the pitch blackness of their branches.

'Poor Cherry!' said Mrs. Freeman.

'Yes,' said her husband. 'It was worse than the boy deserved.'

'Much worse,' said Juliet Nash.

## SELECTED NOTICE

*Other Men's Flowers.* Selected and Annotated by A. P. Wavell. Jonathan Cape, 10s. 6d.

It is impossible to pretend that this volume has great merit as an anthology. That it has been chosen by the Book Society, and treated with reverence by several famous reviewers in the daily papers, may have more to do with the public interest in the sympathetic personality of Lord Wavell than with poetry. It would be alarming, though, if school teachers adopted this book as a manly way of introducing children of the new collectivized era to English poetry. Therefore in this review it is necessary to separate sharply my feelings about Lord Wavell from my feelings about this anthology.

Here is a selection of poems, accompanied by Lord Wavell's own comments. The principle of selection adopted is his retentive memory. It is certainly remarkable that Lord Wavell remembers so much. I must pay tribute not only to his memory, but also to his conscience, which has prevented him from printing anything that he does not remember. This limits the quality of his selection, though not its impressive quantity.

In addition to the limitations of memory and conscience, there is also another limitation imposed on Lord Wavell: this is lack of time, and it affects the notes 'which have been written hurriedly in the short intervals of a very busy life.' If you do not want to blame time, you can blame the publisher; 'the Notes are not altogether my fault, the publisher asked for them'.

Lord Wavell is almost disarmingly apologetic, but the reader may well feel that the total effect is to put poetry very firmly in its place—the intervals of a busy man. As Lord Wavell is exceptionally energetic and has an altogether exceptional memory, the poets could hardly expect much from a world composed of people who have even less time, and worse memories.

Lord Wavell's own use for poetry is recreational. For this reason his selection is largely confined to poems with a strong rhythm and an easy surface. There is plenty of Kipling, and, in fact, the selection from both Kipling and Browning is the strongest in the book. If the whole anthology had been chosen with as fine judgement as Lord Wavell exercises over the work of these two poets, there would be no harm in his liking courageous poetry which can be declaimed.

However, like most people who have a preference for the virile in art, Lord Wavell seems easily to confuse the rollicking with the courageous, and then, by a swift declension, the false with the rollicking. First place is given to Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*, 'that greatest of all lyrics'. Lord Wavell first read this during a golfing holiday at St. Andrews, and since then he has repeated it under fire, 'on a rough Channel crossing, in pain of body or mind'.

It is true that *The Hound of Heaven* has an anodyne quality. It has a good rhythm, the Hound goes lolloping through the stanzas with tongue hanging out of mouth, and feet padding much like the tramp of a policeman's feet:

But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturb'd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;  
They beat—and a Voice beat  
More instant than the Feet—  
'All things betray thee, who betrayest me.'

This is British catholic convert poetry, where the Church is a bobby with a truncheon, the soul of the convert is a wistful drunken child, and fears of hell alternate with jollity in much the same metre as *The Rolling English Road*, and *Do You Remember an Inn, Miranda?* In company with Lord Wavell, I remember the Inn and the tedding for the bedding, and the unhurrying chase and the unperturb'd pace. What I cannot believe, though, is that these provide supreme moments in religious poetry. Let the reader call to mind the Divine Sonnets of Donne, poems of Traherne, Vaughan and Herbert, or Bishop Henry King's beautiful *Esequy on His Wife*: all these are famous poems.

Lord Wavell excludes Wordsworth and Tennyson from his anthology on the ground that their 'verses have never registered an impression on my memory, they seem to me to belong to a limbo which is earthy without being quite human and star-gazing without being inspired'. The first part of this sentence seems merely to demonstrate that the memory test is fallible; the second part, in spite of Lord Wavell's real modesty, is rather disgraceful. For surely the Field Marshal here writes prose of a shoddiness which he would never use in describing a battle. The bracketing of Wordsworth and Tennyson is absurd, and the epithets 'earthy', 'inhuman' and 'star-gazing' as applied to both Tennyson and Wordsworth are too childish a challenge to be discussed. Since Lord Wavell is so outspoken, I feel that Tennyson and Wordsworth, if

they could read his anthology, might very well reply that it belonged to a limbo in which the poets were expected to portray a very one-sided view of humanity, and in which the star-gazing of Francis Thompson was substituted for faith in God, Earth and Truth. The club-room manner of the introduction to the section entitled *Love and All That*, is surely the idiom of the business men in their limbo, when they discuss human relationships. The same cheery inclination to confuse a refusal to look at life with courage (thus tarnishing the Englishman's genuinely courageous qualities) seems to me present in Lord Wavell's dismissal of the moderns:

'Much of the work of T. S. Eliot has obvious dignity and beauty, and is a pleasure to read as long as one makes no effort to solve his cryptograms; but some of it seems deliberately ugly as well as cryptic.'

In short, Eliot's poetry is pleasant so long as one disregards the fact that the poet has something important and difficult to say. To say it is 'deliberately ugly' surely requires some explanation: it is a pity that Lord Wavell did not have a few more minutes in which to explain this, and the sentence which follows, accusing Eliot of 'having sinned against the light by hiding his talent in a napkin of obscurity'.

The younger, between-wars poets, Lord Wavell accuses of 'having left no rubbish-heap unturned, no gutter unexplored, in their search . . .' for 'a proper modern colloquial idiom'. There is some justice in this accusation (at least a constructive and serious criticism could probably be made on these lines) if terms such as 'ugly' and 'obscure' were defined and related (a) to the history of poetry, (b) to the aims of poets. If one knew that Lord Wavell definitely disapproved of the gutter and the rubbish heap in Latin, in the Elizabethans, and in Swift and Pope, then the argument would have more weight. Probably Lord Wavell thinks that in an age when horrible deeds are pregnant in men's minds, and when the situation of humanity can only be interpreted in disastrous and violent terms, the poets should turn away from such things. If he did not think this, he might find reason to be interested in Wordsworth, a poet much preoccupied with the problem of expressing in poetic terms the impact of contemporary events on the human soul. It is gratifying that Lord Wavell should take an interest in poetry. Yet when one thinks of him in this war, it seems rather sad that a poetry-loving general commanding the Eight Army, which contained several poets of promise, should have had such little interest in living poets.

Lord Wavell is on much firmer ground, I think, when he attacks contemporary poets for their lack of courage, and when he criticizes the younger generation for its lack of the spirit of adventure. There is much truth in the argument which Yeats put forward in *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* that poetry must rejoice, even if it is to dance orgiastically over the grave of a tragic generation. The question, which is not faced here, is what is involved in such courage. Surely, the function of poetry is more than whistling to keep the courage of warriors up. It is to exhibit a courage, rare even in the soldier, namely that of discerning before battles have begun the horror implicit in a civilization and reflected in the minds of individuals, and not to flinch even from scenes of spiritual destruction.

STEPHEN SPENDER

BENJAMIN ROBERT  
HAYDON, 1786-1846  
Study for 'Solomon'.  
Chalk



JAMES SMETHAM, 1821-1889. Eve of St. Agnes. Pen and ink

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WILLIAM BELL-SCOTT, 1811-1890  
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SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES,  
1833-1898. A Zithern Player.  
Bronze and gold ink





SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS, 1829-1896. The Carpenter's Shop. Pencil



SIMEON SOLOMON, 1840-1895. Meeting of Dante and Beatrice.

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CHARLES SAMUEL KEENE, 1823-1891. Study of a Boy. Pen and ink

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# **THE WELSH REVIEW**

Editor: Gwyn Jones

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based on the author's recent visit to India, this dynamic  
book will be of value to those who ask  
'To Quit or not to Quit'  
[12s 6d net]

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